

The magazine of Montclair State University

MONTCLAIR

Spring / Summer 2020



Blue's Clues & Josh dela Cruz

ALUMNUS FINDS
SUCCESS
ON TV

COVID-19
SPECIAL SECTION



THE BIG PICTURE

Where's Rocky? After spending the spring on Zoom and social distancing from others, Rocky the Red Hawk, our mascot, spent a little quality time on campus with our iconic statue. To follow Rocky's adventures find him on Instagram @rockyredhawk. Photo by Mike Peters



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Josh Dela Cruz '11 transitions from Broadway to television as the human star of Blue's Clues & You! on Nickelodeon. Photos courtesy of Nickelodeon.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope this message finds you safe and well. For those among you dealing with hardships caused by the ongoing public health crisis, I extend the concern and best wishes of the University community and our hope for better days ahead.

In its 112-year history, the University has endured through two World Wars, the Great Depression, catastrophic weather events, the tragedy of 9/11 and other crises. But this year is the first in which we have had to endure such a difficult situation without the benefit of being together in the fellowship of our University community.

Like every university in the country this spring, we transferred all of our classes online, a monumental undertaking on the part of our faculty, our technology staff, our advisors and our students. The success of the move demonstrated both creativity and commitment, and it enabled students to continue to progress toward their degrees. As you will see in this issue of the magazine, it also illustrated the creative ways in which we managed to remain connected to students, providing continuity in an uncertain time.

We look forward to the day when our community can be together in person again. We need our laboratories and our studios, our classrooms and lecture halls, our theaters and performance spaces. In short, we need our campus, and we need each other. As I write this, we are hoping we hear shortly that the Governor will permit the opening of the campus in the fall, and we are actively planning for the many changes in how we continue instruction, work and University activities in ways that are consistent with the best national and state health and safety guidance.

Over its century-long history, this institution has always worked toward a vision and a mission that grew and evolved to meet the changing needs of society. And we will continue to do so. I am tremendously grateful for the support you, our alumni and friends, have shown Montclair State as we guide our students through this unprecedented time in history. We especially appreciate your words of encouragement and your gifts providing financial assistance to our students during this especially difficult time.

We are keenly aware that the future of today's students, and for succeeding generations of students lies in our hands. With your help, we are doing everything we can not to let them down.

Susan A. Cole

FEEDBACK

Enjoy the magazine?
Have a story idea for us?
We want to hear from you.
Email us at editor@montclair.edu.
(We reserve the right to edit letters.)

Like and follow Montclair State
University on Facebook



Follow us on Twitter and Instagram
@montclairstateu



Write to us at
editor@montclair.edu

OUR FAVORITE TWEETS AND POSTS



Montclair State was mentioned in a tweet from former National Security Advisor and United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice, whose uncle, David Dickson, was the first African American president to head a New Jersey state college or university when he took the helm at Montclair State in 1973.



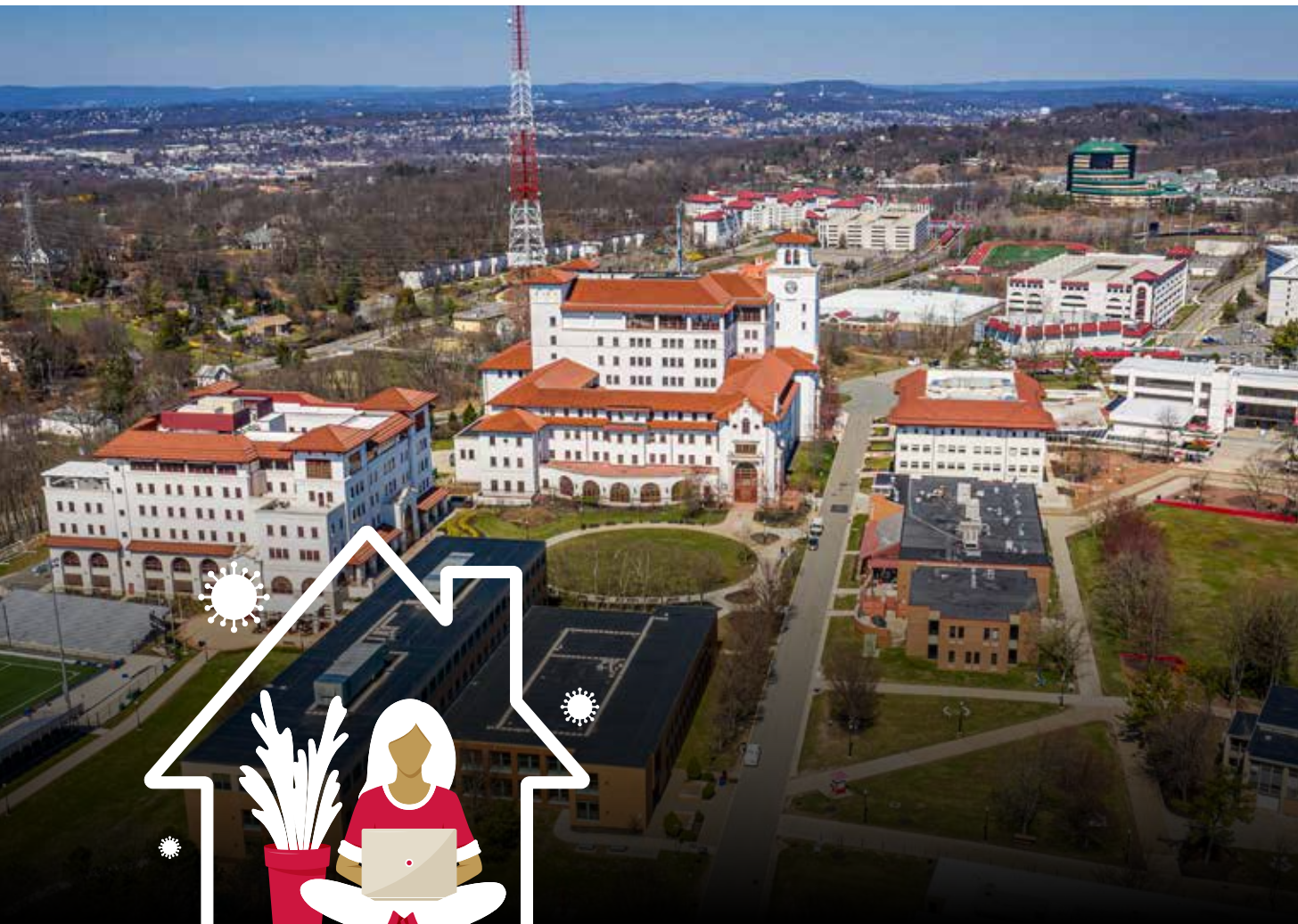
In surprise appearances at a virtual celebration for graduates of the School of Communication and Media in May, MSNBC host Rachel Maddow, comedian Stephen Colbert and Poison singer Bret Michaels offered words of encouragement in uncertain times.

Maddow also read from the 1919 yearbook, a time when students also missed out on senior-year rituals and had an "enforced vacation" due to the Spanish flu. Maddow shared how the earlier generation framed their college experience: "Probably the work of no class has been so broken-in-upon by unusual happenings as has ours," she read.

Montclair State Public Health student Jamel Dobbins was featured in the lead photo for a *New York Times* opinion piece about how New Jerseyans were finding creative ways to help others. The story was tweeted by many including New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, whose tweet read "When crisis hits, New Jerseyans rise to the challenge. #JerseyStrong"



HEADLINES



QUIET CAMPUS

The Montclair State campus stood mostly empty as the novel coronavirus upended the spring semester. With classes moved online through the summer, the majority of Montclair State students completed the spring academic term from their homes, and nearly all employees worked remotely. The University's essential workers kept a quiet campus going for approximately 450 students with nowhere else to go. To read more about how Montclair State responded to the crisis, see our special coverage on COVID-19. ■



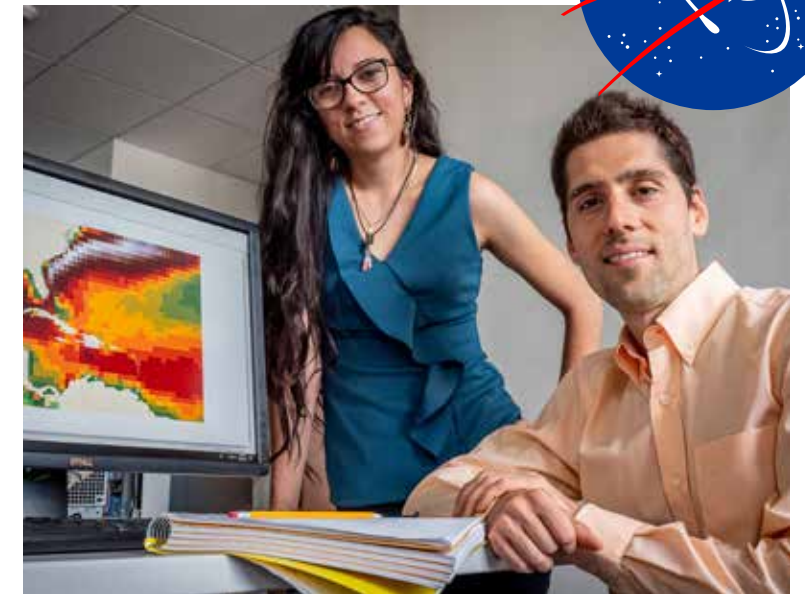
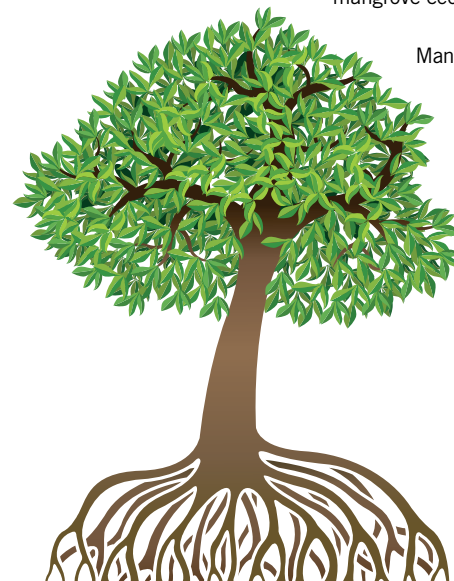
A Virtual Presidential Address

Toward the end of an unprecedented semester, where all classes went online and all but essential workers did their jobs remotely because of the coronavirus pandemic, University President Susan A. Cole gave her State of the University address online. To view it, visit montclair.edu/president/speeches.

Researchers Study Climate Change Effects on Mangroves for NASA

Earth and Environmental Studies Assistant Professor Jorge Lorenzo Trueba and doctoral candidate Isamar Marie Cortés received a three-year, \$165,000 NASA fellowship grant to better understand how mangroves, a coastal plant species, respond to climate change. As part of the NASA Minority University Research and Education Project fellowship, Trueba and Cortés, who is working on a PhD in Environmental Science and Management, are collaborating with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center to measure the negative impact of the changing ratio of evaporation to precipitation – a byproduct of climate change – on mangrove ecosystems.

Mangroves protect many coastal communities around the world and also provide a number of ecosystem services to those communities," says Trueba. "In order to protect mangrove ecosystems, we need to develop quantitative tools to better understand how they respond to a changing climate." ■



Doctoral candidate Isamar Marie Cortés and Earth and Environmental Studies Assistant Professor Jorge Lorenzo Trueba are studying mangroves for NASA.

ALUMNA FINDS DIRECTING SUCCESS

When Lorene Scafaria '99 was just 5 years old, her aunt gave her business cards that read, "Author." In fourth grade, she was writing and directing plays. Today, she is a successful screenwriter, playwright, actress and film director.

Scafaria is best known for her work on the films *Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist* (2008) and *Seeking a Friend for the End of the World* (2012). Most recently, she wrote and directed the crime comedy film *Hustlers* (2019), based on a *New York Magazine* article from 2015, "The Hustlers at Scores," by Jessica Pressler.

Hustlers received the widest release of Scafaria's career and was met with positive reviews from critics as well as general audiences.

Scafaria graduated from Montclair State in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in Theatre. ■



After Funding Cuts, University Plans to Close NJ School of Conservation

Generations of students studied nature at the New Jersey School of Conservation, which has been part of Montclair State for nearly 40 years, but as a result of costs associated with the coronavirus crisis, the University announced in May that it plans to close the School July 1 and return management of the buildings and land to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.

The University's action was taken as part of its necessary response to a 26% cut in its operating appropriation by the state in March and the at least \$24 million of expenses it has incurred as a result of the coronavirus crisis, for a cumulative negative impact of approximately \$34 million.

The New Jersey School of Conservation was established in 1949 on a 240-acre site within the Stokes State Forest in Sussex County. In 1981, the Legislature transferred management of the School from the Department of Environmental Protection to Montclair State and provided an annual appropriation for its operation and maintenance. The School offered

decline in state operating appropriations. Nevertheless, Montclair State continued to support the School's operating costs and its buildings, grounds and equipment needs, in an effort to sustain this important educational and historical state asset. Given the latest cut in state appropriation, especially in the current stressed environment, the University can no longer subsidize the School without any operating or capital assistance for it from the state.

"In an era when both the science of conservation, and the education of future generations about conservation is critically important, it is a matter of genuine and considerable regret to the University that we can no longer maintain the School," said Montclair State University President Susan A. Cole.

"Without any investment by the state over the past 9 years, the University has found itself increasingly unable to sustain the quality of activity deserving of the School and the students, and with the current severe cuts to the University's budget in FY2020, we simply cannot maintain it any longer," Cole said. "The New Jersey School of

Conservation is yet one more casualty of the coronavirus, and it is a circumstance of great disappointment to me personally and to the University community that we must take this action."

The facility has been closed during the pandemic, and the University will relinquish control of the property effective July 1. As a result of the loss of funding and closing of the School, 18 full-time and two part-time employees will be laid off, in compliance with their respective collective bargaining agreements, later in July. ■



environmental education for teachers and students in schools and colleges, and it was used by the University as a field research station. After FY2010, the line item appropriation was eliminated, and the University experienced a continued

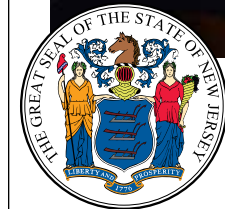


Photo by Mahen Gunaratna, Gov. Murphy's communications director, for The Montclarion

GOVERNOR MAKES A SURPRISE APPEARANCE IN CLASS

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy surprised a communications class on Zoom in May, sitting in place of his communications director Mahen Gunaratna, who was the guest speaker that day, according to an article in the student newspaper, *The Montclarion*.

According to the article, Gov. Murphy's interruption in Adjunct Communications Professor Linda Thomas's class was completely unplanned: He knocked on the door while Gunaratna was speaking. Gunaratna got up to answer the door and Gov. Murphy sat down in his place and offered a few words regarding the coronavirus public health crisis to the students.

"There is no playbook for this, for none of us," Gov. Murphy told the students. "It's an educational matter, a life experience matter, a family matter. It is extraordinary. It's okay to not know all the answers." ■

ØRSTED U.S. OFFSHORE WIND PARTNERS WITH UNIVERSITY



At the announcement, Kris Ohleth, senior stakeholder relations manager for U.S. Offshore Wind Division, Ørstedrom, seated left, with University President Susan A. Cole and Montclair State's Pankaj Lal, founding director of the Clean Energy and Sustainability Analytics Center, and Lora Billings, dean of the College of Science and Mathematics.

Ørsted U.S. Offshore Wind will support clean energy research and educational outreach activities at Montclair State, contributing \$200,000 to support the University's Clean Energy and Sustainability Analytics Center.

The support will aid in the advancement of energy research initiatives, as well as the development of educational events, stakeholder engagement activities and STEM programming for

elementary, middle and high school students.

"Montclair State University has quickly established itself as an innovator relating to the research and assessment of clean and sustainable energy solutions," said Thomas Brostrøm, CEO of Ørsted U.S. Offshore Wind. "We are pleased to partner with them as we continue to make progress with our Ocean Wind project." ■





Seen and Heard (Sometimes Virtually) on Campus

In October 2019, **Valerie Jarrett**, one of President Barack Obama's closest mentors, took part in a conversation hosted by the National Society for Leadership and Success and the Center for Leadership and Engagement, where she shared her views on fighting for gender equality and civil rights, and advocating for women in business and politics: "Recognize there are going to be some bumps along the way, and then surround yourself with people who wish you well."

As the Allen B. DuMont Broadcaster of the Year, **Hallie Jackson**, chief White House correspondent for NBC News and "MSNBC Live" host, shared advice with media majors when she sat down with *Carpe Diem* in November 2019: "Just learn how to ask questions. Be smart and be hungry. That's all you need."

In November 2019, Pulitzer Prize-winning author **Jhumpa Lahiri** (*Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Namesake*) met with a small gathering of students and then later spoke at a public event about her new collection she edited, *The Penguin Book of Italian Short Stories*.

In a conversation moderated by Teresa Fiore, Inerra Chair of the Italian program, Lahiri told students, "Nothing feels impenetrable. These stories are like all literature. It's a way of forming dialogue, a community across time, language, place."

Award-winning Northern Irish poet **Colette Bryce** delivered her first remote poetry reading to Montclair State University students, faculty and staff in March 2020. "This is an incredibly high-tech experience for me," she said, before she read new and recent poems directly from the living room of her home in Newcastle, England.

In April 2020, Professor **Margaret Kelleher** of University College Dublin also lectured remotely about her book *The Maamtrasna Murders: Language, Life and Death in Nineteenth Century Ireland*. The book tells the story of an Irish-speaking man sentenced to death and executed in 1882 for a crime he did not commit, after a trial conducted entirely in the English language. Both events were sponsored by the Marie Frazee-Baldassarre Professorship. ■

UNIVERSITY ACQUIRES POPULAR CAMPUS ICE ARENA

In April, Montclair State assumed ownership of Floyd Hall Arena, the popular ice skating arena located on campus.

Now known as the "Montclair State University Ice Arena," the Little Falls facility houses two NHL-sized rinks as well as amenities for parties and camps. More than 750,000 people visit the arena each year for "learn to skate" programs, hockey and figure skating events, and open skating. The arena is also home to the University's nationally ranked men's and women's ice hockey clubs, and used by the long-standing Montclair Hockey Club, area high schools and the North Jersey Figure Skating Club. It was a convenient training site for student Isadora Williams, who skated for Brazil in the 2018 Olympics in South Korea.



"The arena is a valued asset for the community and our faculty, staff and students," says Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life Karen L. Pennington. "Because it is so popular, when Floyd Hall Enterprises proposed transferring ownership to us, this was an easy decision for the University to make." ■



ERASE HATE



Nick Scafuto, a sophomore Music Education major from Martinsville, New Jersey, was among the members of Montclair State's choirs who made a challenging and inspirational work soar.

Respecting Differences

In performances of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, the passion of Montclair State's choirs were on full display inside Alexander Kasser Theater, where the concert's theme – #EraseHate – became an extraordinary community-wide movement.

Professor Heather Buchanan, director of choral activities, conducted 180 featured performers with sensitivity, tuned to the wide swings of emotions – fear and anger, tolerance and forgiveness – the piece evoked.

In the six months leading up to the December performances, the students channeled the emotions the music elicits – both inside and outside the rehearsal space.

"There's a convergence of energy here," says Sarah Peszka, a senior Music Education major from Philadelphia. "It's turned everything upside down." ■

Partnering With NJ First Lady to Positively Impact Maternal Health

University leaders and state policymakers – including New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy – met at the third annual #123forMoms NJ



Maternal Health Day at Montclair State in January to share efforts to improve maternal health in New Jersey, which currently ranks 47th in the nation in pregnancy-related deaths for women.

Educational leaders from Montclair State's Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health, School of Nursing, and Department of Public Health spoke, as well as moderator Jill Wodnick, a doula who has spearheaded much

of the University's maternal health efforts.

The First Lady lauded the University's initiatives, saying, "Montclair State's efforts are right on target – from providing technical assistance on breastfeeding disparities to supporting the infant-parent relationship through prenatal childbirth classes. Montclair State has clearly identified some of our biggest problems and is working hard to fix them." ■

Montclair High School Students Have It MADE

In a new Early College Program connecting the community and campus, Montclair High School students are taking courses at Montclair State University as part of a dual enrollment program helping them earn college credits while still in high school.

The opportunity, says Gabe Wallerstein, one of 26 students from Montclair High School attending classes, "has made my senior year the best year of school by a long shot."

According to Jeff Gant, the University's director of Undergraduate Admissions, the program, Montclair Academic Dual Enrollment (known as MADE), allows high school students to take courses across nearly all areas of campus, including Computer Science, Math, English Writing, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, German, Music, and Earth and Environmental Studies.

The University also has a dual enrollment agreement with Clifton High School and is in talks with more area high schools. ■

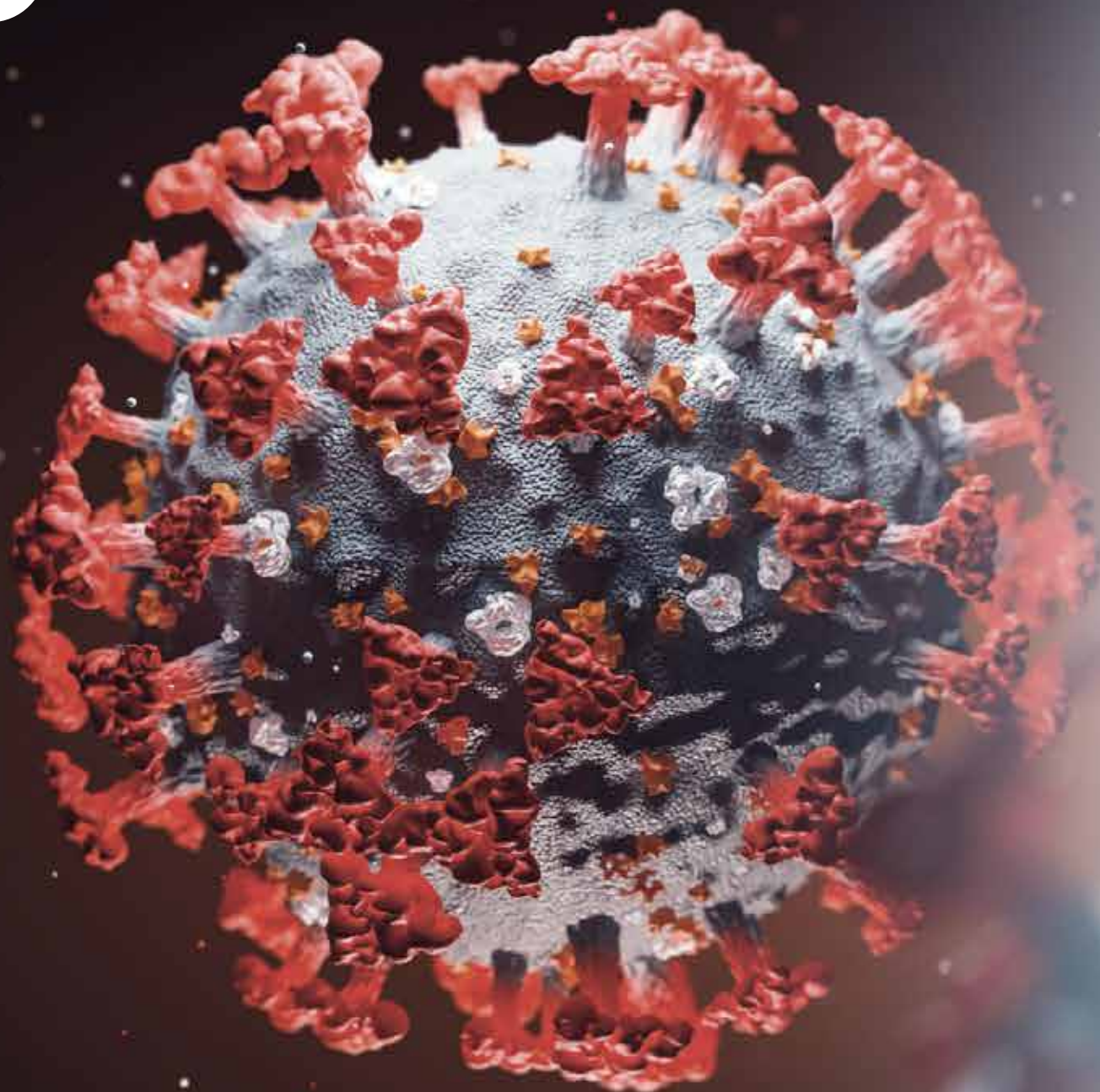


Online Graduate Programs Ranked Among Nation's Best

Montclair State University's online **Master of Arts in Educational Leadership** program has been ranked No. 1 in New Jersey and No. 25 in the nation in the *U.S. News & World Report 2020 Best Online Programs* rankings. The program is one of three online graduate programs offered by Montclair State to be placed among the nation's best in the annual rankings.

The University's online **Master of Business Administration (MBA)** program has risen 43 spots in a single year to be tied at No. 88 out of 321 programs. Montclair State's new **Master of Science in Information Technology** with a concentration in Applied Information Technology (Professional Science Master's) – in its first year of eligibility – was also ranked in the No. 45-58 category, establishing the program as one of the up-and-coming offerings in both New Jersey and the country.

The Educational Leadership program's Educational Administration and Supervision concentration was also ranked among the top 25 in the nation in the rankings' new specialty areas results, coming in at No. 22. ■



Photojournalist Thomas E. Franklin, an assistant professor in Montclair State's School of Communication and Media, documented the national emergency. Shown, New Jersey residents tested for COVID-19 at a Bergen County drive-through center. Photo by Thomas E. Franklin



ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN

Master's students and alumni play a vital role in public health emergency

With the rapid spread of the coronavirus and government orders to stay home, public health alumni and graduate students at Montclair State University find themselves in the center of the response to the coronavirus pandemic, calming frightened residents, tracing the contacts of the ill, and working to control the accelerating outbreak.

"When you work for a health department, you truly drop everything else and a situation like this becomes the sole priority for everyone. It's all hands on deck," said Loyal Helwani, a health educator for the Clifton Health Department.

Helwani is a graduate student in the Master of Public Health (MPH). The program, marking its 10th year, is at the forefront of the crisis, providing education,

commentary, leadership and comfort both on and off campus. "I never would have imagined that the situation with COVID-19 would escalate as quickly as it did," said Helwani, who, along with others on the front lines with ties to Montclair State, are sharing their stories as the emergency intensifies.

"This is truly a remarkable moment they are living," said Professor Lisa Lieberman, who reached out on a listserv to the group of graduate students, alumni and faculty. "I got email after email after email back about their experiences."

'No Clearer Lesson'

In California, the program's first graduate, Tosan O. Boyo '11 MPH, reported he was asked to step out of his role in hospital operations to manage the COVID-19



Tosan O. Boyo '11 MPH is managing the COVID-19 Operations Center for the city and county of San Francisco.

Operations Center for the city and county of San Francisco. The Bay Area was the first place in the nation to pass a shelter-in-place law to address the coronavirus pandemic.

“It’s been a whirlwind,” Boyo said, citing the challenges of constantly changing information. With the lockdown, “we’re making progress,” he said. “We’re anticipating its impact on flattening the curve will be significant.”

As U.S. cases surge, graduate students are learning firsthand how the lag and lapses in testing will make it difficult to detect the outbreak’s true spread. “We are living what we talk about in public health,” Lieberman said. “As a teacher of public health, there could not be a clearer lesson. I wish I didn’t have to teach it in real-time.”

In a blog born of the pandemic, MPH Thoughts, Kat DeMarco, a MPH student studying community health education, shared the story of a relative who was told to avoid all testing centers due to her other serious health concerns. “Although isolation might ensure her safety and the safety of others, what does this mean for epidemiological calculations, and how will this impact the way we handle the pandemic?”

Media Looks to Faculty Experts

Montclair State Public Health Professor Stephanie Silvera, an epidemiologist, has provided the news media with expert insight into the urgency needed to minimize the spread of COVID-19. New

data suggests a worst-case scenario of 1 in 7 New Jersey residents becoming ill. Silvera said hospitals could become inundated with patients they lack the beds to care for.

“We only have so many hospital beds and so many ventilators,” Silvera told the *Star-Ledger*, the state’s largest newspaper. “If you think of it just from a hospital bed perspective, we’re still going to have people who have heart attacks and strokes and need to be in the hospital and need treatment to survive.”

“You’re talking about making decisions about who’s going to survive and who’s not.”

Life on the Front Lines

In Clifton, Helwani has been assisting Health Officer John Biegel, an adjunct professor in Montclair State’s Public Health program, with daily updates to the community.

“We have been receiving calls nonstop, and through our calls, we have been educating the public on what we know about COVID-19, where testing is available – although this has been a challenge – and what the Governor’s executive orders mean for residents and businesses,” Helwani said.

“In the weeks ahead, all of us will be playing a more active role in following up with contacts of positive cases, both informing contacts and conducting interviews.”

As Montclair State faculty across campus prepared for online learning, Professor Amanda Birnbaum, the Public Health department’s chairperson, co-hosted an online workshop with Nursing Dean Janice Smolowitz and University Health Center Director Patricia Ruiz, on talking with students about COVID-19. Offered through the Office for Faculty Advancement, the workshop was well-attended by faculty and staff from across the University.

“The hunger for information and ways to support our students was evident from participants’ questions and ideas,” Birnbaum said.

“I was grateful for the opportunity to share a public health perspective, helping colleagues think about how the social and economic impacts of pandemic mitigation efforts can amplify health disparities, and how we can think about responding in ways that try to promote equity.”

In addition to messaging about how to support our students, the need to practice self-care to prevent burnout is another important public health message.

“These past couple of weeks have been super stressful and I just feel extremely drained after working and hearing these updates,” said Deep Shah ’19, a pharmacy technician at a long-term care facility.

Shah graduated from Montclair State with a degree in Biology and is continuing his

Right: Shoppers stocked up on food supplies in Paramus. Many wore masks and gloves and practiced social distancing. Bottom: Hundreds of cars lined up at the Bergen Community College testing site predawn, before authorities closed down the entrances less than an hour before it reached “maximum capacity.”

Photos by Thomas E. Franklin

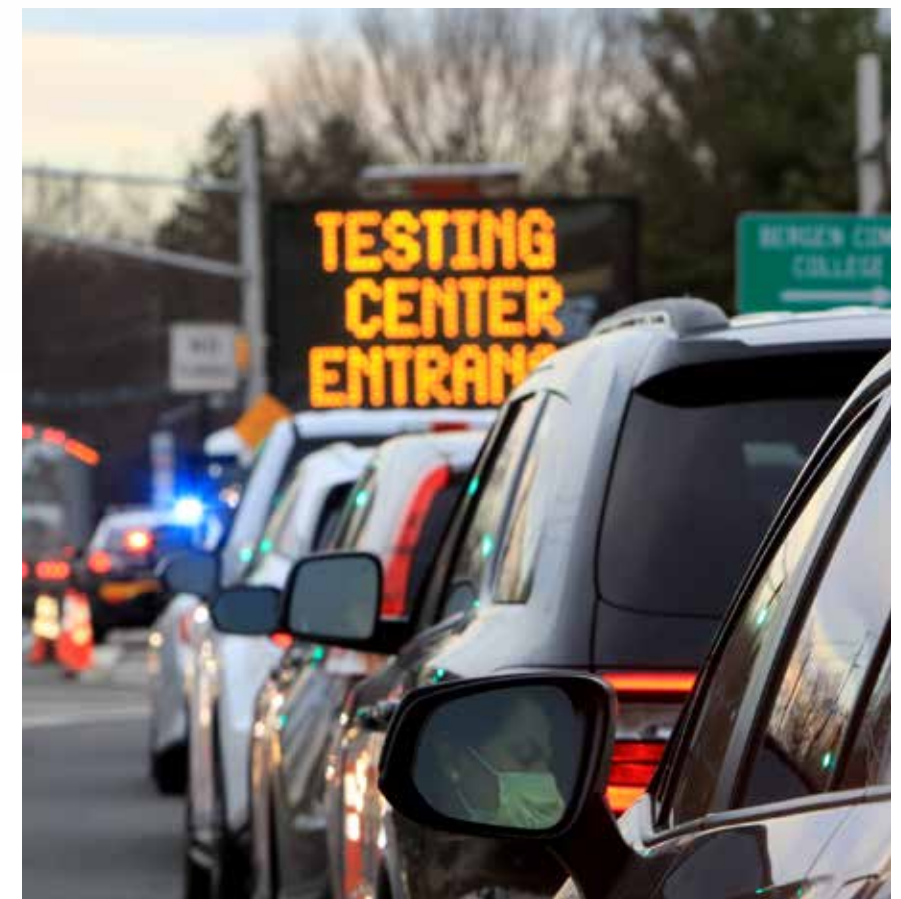


graduate studies in the MPH program. The company where he works supplies medication to nursing homes and hospitals across New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. “It’s expected that the patients will need their medications for the several months of isolation to come,” he said.

“We will be sending out approximately 500,000 prescriptions to make sure our patients are fully stocked on their medications and do not run out,” Shah said.

“Although the situation the world has found itself in at this moment is far from ideal,” said Shira Morris ’18, program coordinator for the NYU Langone Comprehensive Program on Obesity at NYU School of Medicine, “it is amazing to see the collaboration of institutions and the sharing of resources to help mitigate the effect that COVID-19 is having on its victims – victims including COVID-19 patients, patients who need other medical assistance, health care systems, businesses, the economy, and the list goes on.”

In an email to her graduate students, Lieberman recalled having “come of age” as a public health professional during the early days of the HIV epidemic. “I have often talked about the ways in which it defined my career. It is likely that this, too, will begin to define yours.” ■



Being There

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN
AND
MARY BARR MANN

ESSENTIAL WORKERS KEEP A QUIET CAMPUS GOING
FOR RESIDENTS WHO HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO



In a typical spring, Montclair State University bustles with energy, full of thousands of people who live and play, create and debate, research and work on campus.

But this spring, it's silent.

"Everything feels different," observes University Police Officer Jaison Frazier, of the near-empty campus. "With the coronavirus outbreak, all of that has stopped overnight."

With classes moved online through the rest of the semester and summer, the majority of Montclair State students are completing courses from their homes, and nearly all employees are working remotely. The University has all but closed campus, save for a few buildings, including the health center, the Heights and Village residence halls, and take-away meals at Sam's Place, for the approximately 450 students with nowhere else to go.

Heralded as heroes in cities and towns across the country, essential workers on the front lines in this crisis include health care professionals, police and safety workers, grocery store clerks and delivery drivers. While most employees are working remotely, some jobs can only be done in person.

The same holds true for Montclair State University, where essential workers are preparing meals, cleaning and disinfecting, providing safety, security and care to students. They are food service workers,

residence assistants, housekeepers, health care providers, police, EMTs and more – people who continue to come to campus day after day to ensure students are safe, sheltered, nourished and healthy.

Those on the campus front lines say they don't see themselves as heroic – they're just doing their jobs – and are taking precautions while at it.

"To me, the heroes are the people who are out there – the people working and

dealing with, really, the unknown," says University Police Chief Paul Cell. "With this pandemic, more than ever, people are putting their lives on the line for others."

THE NURSES ARE IN

Like some of those still working on campus, Barbara Ackerson, a staff nurse in the University Health Center, says those on campus feel a responsibility to students. "We want to be here," says Ackerson. "We want to be here for the students. We want

to meet their needs. We don't feel like heroes. We're just doing what we do."

The University Health Center remains open, but the majority of appointments are done by phone.

The nurses are hearing from students who have health concerns and questions about immunizations or are worried about COVID-19. As usual, they give out medical advice and medication for other conditions.



Campus Police Officer **Jaison Frazier**:
“Everything feels different.”



University Health Center Assistant Director **Susan Graziano**, left, and Staff Nurse **Barbara Ackerson** are among the health professionals on campus. Ackerson says they feel a responsibility to be here for the students.



Alisa Hannah, a junior studying Family Science and Human Development, who has remained on campus as a resident advisor and service assistant.



Dora Lim, a resident district manager of campus dining: “It’s a big campus, but we’re very tight knit.”



Resident advisor **Brianna Kovach**, a senior majoring in Family Science and Human Development, says the crisis has made her appreciate the “little things” more.



Executive Chef of Residence Dining **Carlos Mohammed** says students need to know there are people here to care for them.

For anyone who presents moderate-to-severe COVID-19 symptoms, nurses advise them to go to an off-campus medical facility for testing.

No matter the issue, students are not allowed to just walk in. They have to call ahead so when they arrive there aren’t other people in the waiting room at the same time.

“We’ve come up with solutions to do whatever we can to keep the students well, to keep them getting the medications they need, to answer their questions, to alleviate some of their fears,” Ackerson says.

VOLUNTEERING FOR THE FRONT LINES

Maintaining social and physical distance is being practiced throughout campus. For the students who are staying on campus, it has changed their way of life.

“A lot of their social support is gone,” says Kevin Schafer, associate director of Housing Services. “They can’t connect with their friends. They can’t bring friends in.”

Resident advisors, like Brianna Kovach and Alisa Hannah, volunteered to stay with students through the crisis and are checking in on their mental and physical well-being and answering their questions.

“I was given the choice to stay or move but I decided to stay and help out,” says Kovach, a senior majoring in Family Science and Human Development. Noting a silver lining to the outbreak, she adds, “It’s made me truly realize that the little things in life are precious.”

Over the past few weeks, the staff in Residence Life and Housekeeping have helped move out the vast majority of students who live on campus, while those who remain moved into two main buildings,

most with their own living quarters and bathrooms. During the moves, residential staff taped floors with lines to help maintain a six-foot-apart distance.

“Personally, I protect myself by taking care of my body,” Hannah says. “Of course I keep my hands clean and I’m more mindful about touching my face, but I also detox my body with natural teas, keep my body well nourished with vitamins, and stay active by exercising often.”

She keeps busy with her online classes and work. “It has been hard not being able to hang out with my friends in person, but I combat that by staying in touch with my circles over the phone and with social media. Whenever I feel stress overall from this pandemic, I cope by reading my Bible and practicing self care.”

‘THIS IS HOME’

As of April 6, about 450 students were still calling campus home, a little less than 10 percent of the usual residential population.

“The old adage of ‘your home away from home’ has changed,” Schafer says. For the students who are living on campus during the crisis, “either their original home is not a safe place or they have no home but here.”

For that reason, it’s important that they feel safe. Adds Executive Chef of Residence Dining Carlos Mohammed, “In this uncertain time, these students need to know there are people here to care for them.”

It’s also important for front line workers to feel safe. To protect his 40 officers, Chief Cell separates squads, sanitizing the vehicles and equipment between shifts. Most of all, he says, “We still have to maintain our duties as police officers. Our patrol function is still the same. But if we respond to a call, we have to take measures to protect ourselves.”

“We have to put on a mask, gloves and safety goggles,” he says. “We didn’t have to do that before.”

Officer Frazier, who has a wife and 15-month-old daughter at home, feels a personal connection to Montclair State students and their safety. He was once one himself, earning a bachelor’s in Family and Child Services in 2004 and a master’s in Higher Education Leadership in 2017.

He takes care to follow the precautions. “You’ve got to keep a level head,” he says.

‘STAY APART AND STAY STRONG’

In buildings that remain open, housekeepers are wiping down every potential place where a hand could touch, says Gena Coffey, assistant director of Environmental Health and Safety.

“Honestly, the housekeepers are among the biggest heroes here. Without them, without

us knowing that they’re out there cleaning and disinfecting everything, nobody’s going anywhere,” Coffey says.

The essential staff are regularly updated and encouraged to ask questions. “I want to make sure that they’re being heard. That’s the biggest thing,” Coffey says.

This pandemic is not the first time University essential personnel have stepped up during a crisis. Dora Lim, a resident district manager of campus dining, recalls working in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. “It’s a big campus, but we’re very tight knit,” she says.

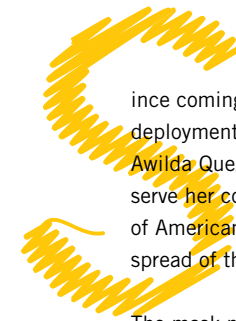
But the need to physically distance from one another is a stark difference between the two catastrophes, says Chief Cell. “During 9/11 we were coming together to find strength and here we need to stay apart and stay strong.” ■

FIGHTING COVID-19 ONE STITCH AT A TIME

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN

Fashion Studies alumni
and students rally to help
make face masks for
health care workers

Tools of the trade for
America's mask-making
army of volunteers.



ince coming home in early March from deployment in Kuwait, U.S. Army Specialist Awilda Quezada Puntiel '18 continues to serve her country – these days with an army of Americans sewing masks to fight the spread of the coronavirus.

The mask makers, which include Fashion Studies alumni and students, are a bright spot amid the global pandemic, their sense of duty and colorful cotton creations shoring up the medical front lines running low of personal protective equipment.

Making the masks has been therapeutic for Quezada, who says it gives her a renewed sense of purpose. She left Kuwait just before the coronavirus outbreak prompted the U.S. military to order troops scheduled to return home to stay where they are.

While grateful to be home, Quezada says the crisis and self-isolating left her feeling disconnected – until she answered the call from a college friend who knows Quezada can sew, asking her to unpack her sewing machine.

“She was an angel,” Quezada says, referring to Lexi Nelson '17, her friend from the Fashion Studies department at Montclair State University. “She got me off my couch.”

Nelson is associate director at Visiting Angels of Ramsey, a senior care agency. Located in Bergen County, the epicenter of New Jersey's coronavirus, she responded to



the urgent need for masks to protect both caregivers and the elderly, and at hospitals, for the nurses and doctors burning through their supplies of protective gear.

Across the country, sewers are sitting at their machines with patterns for the handmade masks. In hospitals, they are being used to extend the life of medical-



Awilda Quezada Puntiel puts the finishing touches on a handmade mask.

grade masks, which would typically be disposed of after a single patient. Support staff, nursing homes and first responders also welcome the homemade versions since medical masks increasingly aren't available.

Quezada wasn't surprised when Nelson reached out with the idea for alumni and current students in Fashion Studies to join the sewing efforts. Nelson “was always the business guru,” Quezada recalls of their group assignments at Montclair State. “She was the one who would always be able to come up with ideas and actually bring them to life.”

In less than a week, Quezada had stitched more than 150 face masks. Sarah Wyatt '17, a visual merchandiser for CB2 furniture, is making masks as well, inspired to join the efforts because her roommate works at a hospital where masks are being rationed. “I want to try to push out as many as we can to help out,” she says.

Brianna Cesaro, a senior Fashion Studies major, has been working on the masks for up to 14 hours a day, her brother helping by attaching labels. She's distributed most of her handiwork to the local EMT team in Kenilworth, New Jersey.

“It feels great to be able to help those who are putting their lives at risk for us,” she says. “I want to make their jobs easier and let them know that we stand behind them and that they are not alone.” ■

Home safe after global adventures,
students and faculty adjust to a new normal

ADAPTING TO A WORLD

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN

In the natural wonders of Charles Darwin's lab on the Galápagos Islands, biology students and faculty from Montclair State University, who had left for one of the world's most remote locations before travel was restricted, were mostly unaware of how the rest of the world was reacting to the growing spread of the coronavirus. During their "once-in-a-lifetime" research opportunity, the world beyond was quickly changing.

"There was little connectivity and you absolutely do not have CNN or the BBC coming through your TV in the hotel," recalls Associate Professor of Biology Jennifer Krumins, who co-led the spring break research trip in early-to-mid March.

But the "snippets" of information the group received was enough to know the COVID-19 was getting bad. "We were all very aware that we were hidden away and we were silently tense about how we were going to get back," says Krumins, who was relieved when they all returned home safe and coronavirus-free. →



Ariana Leyton, who graduated with degrees in Sustainability Science, and Dylan White, a senior studying Business Administration, in the Norwegian fjords.

CHANGED WHILE ABROAD



Associate Professor Jennifer Krumins at a Galápagos waterfall during the research trip in early March with Montclair State biology students in the days before social distancing. Shown are Ann Muthee, Stephanie Getto, Alorah Bliese and Siena Stucki.



The group was among dozens of Montclair State students and faculty abroad when the spread of the coronavirus accelerated around the world. The outbreak overshadowed spring break adventures and cut short study abroad programs, including that of junior Public Health major Justin Inigo, who was studying in London.

“Coronavirus was always the topic of conversation, in and out of the classroom,” Inigo says. “We always joked about being sent home because of it, but I don’t think any of us actually thought it would happen.”

Kia Sabo recalls the middle-of-the-night reaction in Prague when a European travel ban was announced by President Trump: “My friends went into panic mode, crying at the tram stop and repeating the phrase, ‘This was not supposed to happen.’”

OASIS BEFORE THE STORM

The Galápagos Islands are “a giant classroom for ecology and evolution, for geology and oceanography and sustainability,” says Krumins, a specialist in microbial ecology and biodiversity. She organized the trip with Professor Paul Bologna, a marine ecologist, to make connections with the Charles Darwin Research Station for future education and scientific trips.

They traveled with 11 students, a mix of graduate and undergraduates studying biology. “We were snorkeling one day off the side of an island with sea turtles, seals and sharks, and the most amazing fish you’ve ever seen. Then, plastic garbage floats by,” Krumins recalls.

“It gives you this view of even where you think you’re in this pristine, preserved place, you see human impacts. It was a major learning experience.”

Six-thousand miles away in Prague, Sabo, a sophomore Business Administration major, was making the most of her time abroad, studying in cafes, shopping at local markets, walking thousands of steps each

day. On weekends, she tasted the cuisine in Wroclaw, Poland (“best food, hands down”), skied the Swiss Alps and was awed by the architecture in Budapest. “I learned so much about community, culture and myself,” she says.

Ariana Leyton ’17, ’18 MS, a project coordinator for University Communications and Marketing, unplugged in the Norwegian fjords, a dream vacation for someone who had studied Sustainability Science as both an undergraduate and graduate student. Leyton was unaware of the scale of the crisis until family began frantically texting about the travel ban. The news had Leyton and her traveling companions scrambling for flights home.

Back in Prague, the 24 hours after Sabo learned she had to return to the United States was a “crazy mess of emotions.” She made rushed goodbyes “to new friends, the wonderful city I was studying in and all the adventures that could have been.”

Across the globe, the biology students in the Galápagos returned home on some of the last flights to leave Ecuador.

“We had some minor travel glitches, but in the middle of all that, a minor travel glitch can be pretty scary,” Krumins says. “I didn’t really realize the degree to which we were sitting on pins and needles until I knew everybody was safe.”

STUDYING ‘ABROAD’ WITHOUT LEAVING THE HOUSE

All students and faculty who came home from overseas had to self-isolate for 14 days. Inigo and Sabo and other students who were studying abroad are finishing their terms online and passing the time with do-it-yourself projects.

“To be quite truthful, quarantine is boring,” Inigo says. “Right now, I’m purging my closet. I bought way too many clothes in London.”



Clockwise from left to right: Justin Inigo “phones home” from London; Kia Sabo was among study abroad students whose trips were cut short by the coronavirus; Associate Professor Jennifer Krumins with students, from left, Katherine Palacios, Jonathon Eisenstein and Virginia Osnato.



Sabo is weaving a basket. “My mom also adopted another dog, so making sure the new addition is happy and mixing well is another task to keep me busy.”

The online classes present some challenges and bright spots. “We are expected to be on real time and real time is six hours ahead, so my noon class is now at 6 a.m.,” Sabo says. But there have been “great moments where we see community and humanity emerge. In my philosophy class we have had many discussions on topics that relate back to the crazy times that we are presently in.”

In a favorite photo from the trip, Krumins is leaning against a rock “looking professorial,” while students in the background splash in a Galápagos waterfall. She admitted to being in a funk for a few days after returning.

Then Krumins shifted gears to put her courses online and prepare for a virtual scientific meeting, adapting to this new normal, she says.

“It’s the same challenge we’re all going through, just completely refocusing your life.” ■





BY MARY BARR MANN

THE beat Goes On

Cali School faculty and students share online performances and connect across continents with **#calimusicfamily**

A trumpeter plays a rousing rendition of "West End Blues." A tenor teases an aria by Puccini. A flutist shares a soulful sonatine.

One is in a sun-filled room. Another surrounded by books. The last stares through a window, seemingly inspired by the budding trees.

They are all part of the John J. Cali School of Music family – or #calimusicfamily. Each is alone and socially distant but all are brought together by social media.

As students and faculty across Montclair State University – and, indeed, the world – have been sent home and separated in

the effort to blunt the spread of COVID-19, the University is using social media and technology to further their studies, help them share and create work, and fight the dispiriting effects of isolation.

From Instagram to Zoom teleconferencing, the show must go on.

"There's a lot of innovative work going on in the Cali School of Music, and I'm glad we can continue to educate and inspire people at this most difficult of times," explains Heather J. Buchanan, professor of Music and director of Choral Activities.

Toward that end, Buchanan has been meeting via Zoom with the 70-person-strong MSU University Singers Chorus

class, discussing strategies for learning and working on "All My Trials" – a piece Buchanan aims to have ready for "virtual" performance in four weeks.

"It's an impressive broad use of technology to stay connected and help Cali students keep stride while remote learning," says Buchanan. "There will be a plethora of 'virtual choir' videos from many choirs in the coming weeks and months. It's a lot of fun, but only one of the optional projects I'm giving our choral students the opportunity to participate in. Engaging our students through our virtual series 'Masterful Musings' and viewing and discussing previous performances together will also maintain the connection that's central in any choral community."

For those listening and watching at home, follow @calischoolofmusic on Instagram and/or look for #calimusicfamily on social media. In addition, University Singers' recording *I Sing Because...*, which was originally slated for official release at the now-canceled annual Choral Showcase at the Kasser Theater, is available for purchase as a CD and soon as a download. "It's actually our debut solo recording as all previous recordings have been with professional orchestras or other organizations," says Buchanan.

For students Maddie Meier and Rebecca Masser, the creative potential of technological connection has been eye opening.

Both are members of the flagship choir, University Singers, and also sing in the symphonic choir MSU Chorale. Meier is a graduating senior in Vocal Performance who is staying with Buchanan through the virus outbreak. Masser is an international exchange student from Graz, Austria. Due to COVID-19, Masser had to return to Austria and is currently in a 14-day quarantine where she has been connecting online for her classes.

Says Meier: "I knew that this switch online was going to take a lot of navigation through unknown avenues in terms of our goals as students and faculty at the Cali School of Music. Much of what we do as professional musicians requires human contact, as many, if not all, of our

performances and rehearsals are live. It has been comforting for me though, to see how students and faculty of the music school have come together to really be there for one another and make the most out of the resources that we currently have."

She adds, "So many of my teachers have made it clear to me that they will be with us every step of the way, and that has really meant a lot."

Masser agrees, giving shoutouts to professors Anthony Mazzocchi and Lori McCann, as well as Buchanan. "They and many more were trying to figure out the best ways to continue in such a difficult time. Many professors are reaching out to their students and checking if they are all right – this cannot be taken for granted."

Masser explains that her year of studying abroad ended so abruptly "that I couldn't even say farewell to my professors who were so supportive throughout my whole stay and to my friends that, I'm sure, became lifelong friends."

"It's very fascinating to see how all this can affect people positively because we are being forced to slow down and press a reset button," says Masser. "The fact that helps me keep going is that I am still able to connect with most of my friends through technology. Meeting all these friendly faces through Zoom for the class MSU Singers definitely was the highlight of my week and it was only Tuesday. It's also good to know that we all are in this together and have the support of each other."

Back in the U.S., Meier called the group meeting via Zoom a "bright spot" in the darkness. "I got so excited hearing all the little 'ding dongs' of everyone entering into the Zoom chat! It was really pretty emotional getting to see everyone, and just knowing that we are all still doing OK."

"I left the chat, just feeling so inspired and uplifted." ■

RACING AGAINST TIME

BY MARY BARR MANN

**Montclair State
MIX Lab delivered
tens of thousands
of face shields to
COVID-19 front
line workers**



Alex McDonald tests a face shield design at Montclair State's MIX Lab.

W

hen Montclair State's MIX Lab team started producing face shields on 3D printers amid the growing COVID-19 pandemic, they quickly realized it wasn't enough. The team needed to figure out how to make more – and fast.

“The need for PPE (personal protective equipment) is at scale,” says Iain Kerr, co-director with Jason Frasca of the MIX Lab and professor of Innovation Design. Kerr reports that in northern New Jersey alone, the demand is for hundreds of thousands of face shields, if not more.

“The U.S. needs 3.5 billion masks. And this region – the megalopolis from Boston to Washington, D.C. – needs over 200 million shields,” says Kerr. “3D printing 350 a day was not the way to go.”

The MIX Lab, founded in 2015 and housed in Montclair State University's Feliciano Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (FCE&I), is a facility where students and community members work together to solve problems using innovation and digitally mediated “making” – aka 3D printing.

To address the need for better design and process in making mass quantities of face shields, the MIX Lab has joined with Montclair Design Week/DesignShed and Michael Rees of William Paterson University. The team is now collaborating on everything from research to design to supply chain management to hospital interface, volunteer recruitment, social media outreach and fundraising.

On the design end, the result of the collaboration is new open-source face shields that can be produced more cheaply (potentially less than \$1/unit as compared to more than \$5/unit) and faster than those the MIX Lab was 3D printing. “We have two designs, one closed at top and one open,” says Kerr. “They're both super cheap.”

He says the designs use “very little 3D printing and a ton of ingenuity.”

“You can literally make these face shields with scissors and a hole punch and some binding covers and elastic streamers,” says Altarik Banks '18, innovation and design researcher for MIX Lab and design principal of the collective design studio HOMA.

Banks credits team member Alex McDonald for many of the improvements. “In terms of production, now we have them cut in a streamline process. There’s a drill press, a jig, a paper cutter,” he says.

Currently, the team has converted the Montclair Innovation Lab at Lackawanna Plaza into an assembly line where Montclair Design Week is coordinating volunteers. “When the machine works perfectly, we can get over 1,000 shields a day out the door – and they are what the hospitals want,” Kerr says.

Meanwhile, the 3D printers have been freed up for specialty projects.

By the end of April, more than 15,000 face shields had been delivered – with more in production – to RWJBarnabas Health System, University Hospital, St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center in Paterson, Mountainside Hospital, Hackensack University Medical Center Palisades, The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, and Montclair State University Emergency Medical Services.

The only components needed are more money and more volunteers – and that is changing fast.

“We can fabricate the pieces at 1,500 per hour,” Kerr says. “If we had the materials and we had a volunteer force available, we could be making a huge amount.”

To make that happen, the University has set up a crowdfunding/giving page. In addition, the Feliciano Center reallocated \$10,000 in 3D printing supplies no longer needed for educational purposes as a result of the transition to an online delivery model and received \$17,000 in donations, 100% of which will be used to purchase materials.

The lab has received generous support from some of the University’s supporters, including The Provident Bank Foundation and alumnus Joe Cucci '66.

“How does a regular person like me help in a pandemic? My support for this effort helped make 1,684 face shields to provide to three hospitals in New Jersey including the one where me and my siblings were born,” says Cucci. “It is a great thing to be able to do.”

Beyond its own assembly line, the MIX Lab team is working to coordinate the makers’ community across New Jersey utilizing a Facebook page (New Jersey Makers Response to COVID-19).

“We’re trying to get people to switch to this family of designs. It sounds kinda cool to have this 3D high tech method, but if you move to this simpler method, you can make thousands,” says Kerr.

“Part of our mission is to innovate as well as collaborate with others – whether that be the global makers’ community or local higher education,” says Feliciano School of Business Clinical Specialist and MIX Lab Co-Director Jason Frasca. “We want to move people to better, faster designs.”

“Core to the Center’s work is collaboration with a rich ecosystem of global and local talent that helps blur the line between where MSU’s campus ends and where the entrepreneurial community begins,” says FCE&I Executive Director Carley Graham Garcia. “It is this innovation that got noticed by local hospitals and health care providers as COVID-19 began to rapidly spread around the world and in our own backyard.”

Says Banks, “It’s really powerful and really impactful that our product is reaching the front line workers. I’m really excited about it.” ■

“How does a regular person like me help in a pandemic? My support for this effort helped make 1,684 face shields to provide to three hospitals in NJ including the one where me and my siblings were born. It is a great thing to be able to do.”

—JOE CUCCI '66



Team assembles masks at the Montclair Innovation Lab, 10 Lackawanna Plaza, Montclair. The Lab is home of the Feliciano Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation's soon-to-be launched off-campus incubator.



Altarik Banks '18, innovation and design researcher for the MIX Lab.

LESSONS from AFAR

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN

AFTER A BIG TRANSITION,
MOVING CLASSES ONLINE
HAS GIVEN PROFESSORS
NEW WAYS TO CONNECT
TO STUDENTS

In the move to online classes, University faculty are embracing new digital tools and technology.

What do virtual classrooms look like? The answer varies, but since the mid-semester switch to online instruction, faculty have become creative, adapting with digital tools for virtual labs, adding podcasts, adjusting with video streaming software for lectures and discussion, directing choirs on pitch in Zoom rooms, and even creating virtual space for mindfulness and self care.

But teaching through a pandemic calls for more than simply providing lessons from afar; it calls for additional compassion and patience.

Having the virtual classroom setting now inside the homes of both professors and students makes for some lighter class moments, like seeing the stuffed animals that adorn a childhood bedroom or being interrupted by children or parents or pets, who sometimes make guest appearances in the "classroom."

The change also provides a window into the more challenging aspects of lives altered by stay-at-home orders, including students who struggle with a host of problems, from internet access to financial and mental health needs, to caring for sick relatives or being ill themselves.

Whatever their circumstances, about 21,000 students are trying to complete a spring term like no other.

"It's too early to know definitively how successful we are at supporting students during the COVID crisis, but faculty are positive if cautious," says Emily J. Isaacs, executive director of the Office for Faculty Advancement. "They report that students are coming to classes, although attendance is lower, and students tell them of family members who are ill, and even more frequently, out of work."

Navigating Hardships

While taking classes, many Montclair State students are working on the front lines of

the pandemic, including first responders, nurses and public health professionals. They are essential workers, cashiers at the grocery store, teachers home schooling both their own children and those in New Jersey classrooms.

Assistant Professor Thomas E. Franklin says his experience as a journalist prepared him for this crisis. "I've been in situations where the unpredictable happened and you're trying to function under the strain of an emotional world occurrence. You just figure out a way to still do your job and be productive."

Like other professors, Franklin is learning of the hardships many students are experiencing – students like Diana Ortiz, a senior majoring in Communication and Media Arts who juggles her course load with working full time as a unit secretary on a trauma floor at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital to pay tuition.

The coronavirus is always on her mind, she says, whether she is at work or at home. At

the hospital, "you don't know what you're walking into. Talking to nurses, and seeing their eyes, there is a lot of anxiety."

Her biggest worry, Ortiz says, is bringing the virus into the home she shares with her parents. And while no longer commuting nearly an hour to campus, the stress at work and pressure of finishing the semester leave her more tired than usual. "Half the time, I'm in a daze," Ortiz says. "My mind just isn't there."

Ortiz says she is grateful to the professors like Franklin who recognize what she is going through. "It goes a long way – the support you get, it goes a long way."

Removing Barriers

"Faculty at Montclair State have always felt great compassion and even affection for their students, but perhaps more so than ever before, faculty are communicating this compassion directly to their students," Isaacs says.

Pass/Fail options for undergraduates and flexibility of deadlines are among the ways the University and faculty are removing barriers as students transition to the online learning environment.

"That's been a big thing for us," says Rebecca Linares, an assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning. "We're trying to be mindful to not make any assumptions about what it means when a student doesn't show up or doesn't turn something in. Our students are navigating totally different realities right now and different responsibilities."

Supporting the rapid preparation with the mid-March decision to move all classes online, the University developed a peer-to-peer model to share strategies and instructional technologies. The support includes developing a variety of ways for students to attend class, access content knowledge and demonstrate their comprehension. Faculty say they're finding ways to bring mindfulness – the practice of paying attention to a moment

with openness and curiosity – into their virtual assignments.

In a class on religions of the world, meditative practices were integrated alongside the introduction to Asian religions, students listening to a recording of chants to soothe their minds. "I'm trying to incorporate some of the things we've been learning as tools for potentially coping with this situation," says Assistant Professor Kate Temoney.

"It's become so much more important," adds Heather J. Buchanan, professor in the Cali School of Music. "I am trying to help students cope and find a sense of purpose through meaningful learning experiences. Also encouraging them to understand that when this situation is eventually over, hopefully it will be a small blip in the context of a whole life. But for most students, it is tremendously overwhelming right now." ■

Read the full story at the News Center.



Campus organizations, clubs, sports and friends found ways to stay connected.

Distance Can't Keep Them Apart

STUDENTS FIND WAYS TO CONNECT ONLINE TO SOCIALIZE, STAY FIT AND MAINTAIN A SENSE OF 'CAMPUS LIFE'

How do college students connect when they must be physically distant? Turns out, when they tune in, Zoom in and plug in, there's actually quite a lot.

With stay-at-home orders to limit the spread of the coronavirus, Montclair State students are getting creative and staying connected by posting on Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and other popular social media sites.

The screen time is helping them get a sense of normalcy back. "We live in a time where we can do things like this. We can do video calls, we can game together, we can FaceTime together," said Kaya Maciak, a sophomore Communication and Media Arts major.

For students missing the rituals of the spring semester, and especially the seniors disappointed by the

postponement of Commencement and the cancellation of special events, putting their energy and creativity into the videos has lessened the sting.

Senior dance majors raised the video barre, recording a virtual "last" performance of their spring showcase, Martha Graham's "Ritual to the Sun" from *Acts of Light*. The dancers move across their lawns or kitchens, wherever they could find the space, performing the choreography they have been rehearsing for months before COVID-19 canceled their show at the University Partners Showcase in New York City.

Even the school mascot, Rocky the Red Hawk, while social distancing from his "nest," created a video with other university mascots.

Read the full story at the News Center.

Families, historians look back through generations to solve the mysteries of the **112-YEAR-OLD MESSAGE** in a bottle discovered in College Hall and left by bricklayers who built the foundation for the University

THE Descendants

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN



"This is to certify that this wall was built by two bricklayers from Newark, N.J., by the names of William Hanly and James Lennon, members of No. 3 of the B.M.I.U. of America."



A message in a bottle that tumbled out of a 112-year-old wall demolished during renovations of College Hall proved an irresistible genealogical treasure hunt, leading to the descendants of one of the men.

The lives of the two bricklayers – William Hanly and James Lennon – were all but forgotten until the note's discovery last year. With the help of family historians and a Montclair State alumna who is also an ancestry expert, family trees have uncovered some of the mysteries of the two skilled craftsmen from Newark, New Jersey.

Descendants of James Lennon now understand more about the man they knew only through a single photograph. And the fate of William Hanly is poignant and best understood through the newspaper account of his young wife's funeral just a few months after the co-workers built and left a note in the wall.

"I think the bottle was meant to be found the way it all turned out," says Nancy Foster, the granddaughter of James Lennon.

Message in a Bottle

The bricklayers' note, dated July 3, 1907, and among the oldest ever discovered, piqued people's interest around the world in finding their families.

Written in elaborate cursive script, the note was placed inside a beer bottle; the pieces of which would ultimately contribute clues to the bricklayers' roots. Manufactured by the Consolidated Bottling Co. and made for pale ale or porter, the bottle was broken more than a century later when Robert Kanaby started tearing down the wall.

A family photo that helped unravel the mystery of the descendants of the bricklayers.



"I can imagine what they were doing the day before the Fourth of July, kicking back, having a couple of beers and deciding to write a note and put it in the wall," says Kanaby, who found the bottle when his chipping gun hit its hiding space.

Story Goes Viral

This magazine first published a story on the discovery in the Fall/Winter 2019 issue. Spreading on social media, the story was picked up by local, national and international media outlets, sending out an SOS to long-lost family. It traveled as far as Russia and Thailand, was front-page news and viewed by millions.

Cousins, nieces and siblings connected to Lennons, Hanlys and Hanleys, after seeing the news on CNN or in *People*, began reaching out to each other and to the University: "Could *that* William Hanley be Uncle Bill?" "Is James Lennon the same man as my grandfather in this old family photo?"

Family historians shared mementos, including a photo of James T. Lennon in his 40s that set the search on the right path.

With the pieces of the puzzle coming together, Lorraine Arnold, an alumna and a genealogist, came to campus to look over the clues. As the founder of Legacy Roots, a company devoted to legal, historical, genealogical and biographical research, the Jurisprudence degree she earned from Montclair State in 2011 helped her launch a career finding missing evidence and people who have gone incognito.

This College Hall discovery made for a good mystery, she says. "When you have very little information, that's what makes the plot intriguing and interesting." And with a 112-year-old note signed by men with common last names, "we have very little information to go by."

But that information turned out to be enough. "By moving beyond face value, gleaning and researching the facts that are listed, multiple doors open that ultimately bring the story to life," she explains.

Census Data Provides a Clue

The bottle was found during the renovation of a campus centerpiece – an original mission-styled building erected to educate teachers.

Concealed in a space within an 18-inch thick wall, it would have been reasonable to believe the note would remain hidden for a long time, if not forever.

“Back then, blood, sweat and tears went into building this wall. When we found the bottle, a little bit of tears were shed,” Kanaby says.

Historians and family members gathered primary sources, including newspaper articles, birth and death certificates, directory and U.S. Census records, which point to James T. Lennon, the youngest child of a bricklayer named Thomas, as the most likely Lennon to have worked on College Hall in 1907.

Genealogy is not an exact science, but researchers can make reasonable conclusions. According to Arnold: “Sometimes you have to take a leap of faith based on the overwhelming documentation that you have available to you.”

Connecting the Dots

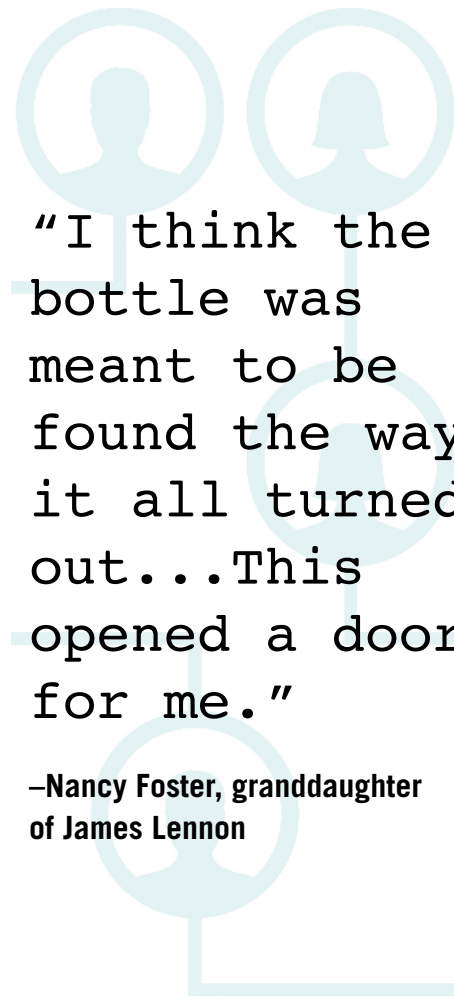
The U.S. Census provided leads, beginning in 1900 with the occupation of James T. Lennon of Newark listed as mason. State birth records show that in March 1914, James, then 43, and his wife, Otilia, 39, had their only child, a daughter, Eileen.

Eileen married Charles Richard Moore in 1939. A Moore family historian shared a meticulously organized binder of old records and photos she has researched and collected through the years tracing the roots not only of the Moores but also the families they married.

Eileen and Charles had two children who survived infancy. Their daughter, Nancy Foster, is now a teacher who lives in Florida. Their son, Jon, died in 2005. An indexed section of family keepsakes includes a photo of James Lennon in his 40s, wearing formal attire.

“This opened a door for me,” says Foster, noting the remarkable connection of her teaching career and her grandfather’s role in building one of New Jersey’s early teachers’ colleges.

James died on October 27, 1942, two years before his granddaughter was born, and is buried in an unmarked grave at Holy Sepulcher Cemetery in East Orange. Neither Foster’s mother nor grandmother passed down family stories, she says, so learning about his connection to Montclair State gave her a window into his life she didn’t previously have.



“I think the bottle was meant to be found the way it all turned out...This opened a door for me.”

—Nancy Foster, granddaughter of James Lennon

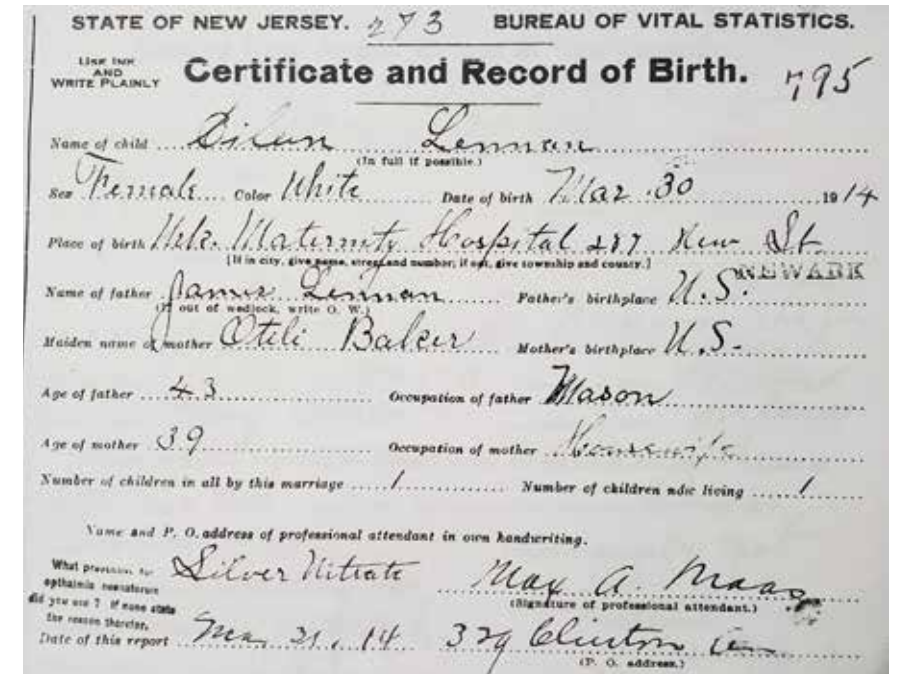
Lennon’s pride of ownership in a job well done resonates with his great-granddaughter Ali Young, a retired Air Force flight chief who lives in Alaska. “I now know where I get my work ethic from,” she says.

Union Bonds

Looking deeper into the life of William P. Hanley reveals strong ties between the two bricklayers.

“The camaraderie between union members and laborers, bricklayers, masons, carpenters is very tight,” Kanaby says. “Once you make a bond with someone, it’s almost a bond for life.”

Hanley and Hanly are common names, often interchanged through the generations. And public records tell a story of a mason by the name of William Hanley, whose wife Mary O’Mara died at age 29. A November 20, 1907, *Newark Evening Star* article about her death shows she died suddenly and notes that James Lennon was a pallbearer. “Last Saturday she apparently was in the best of health. In the morning, she washed and dressed her children, whose ages are one to ten years, and sent them off to play. In the afternoon, she complained of pains in the region of the heart.”



A sample of the records from the New Jersey State Archives

Further tracing Hanley after his wife’s death proved difficult. The 1910 Census shows their daughters living in orphanages and a son, William Jr., being raised by a widow. The date of the bricklayer’s death remains unknown.

Renovation and Dedication

College Hall opened in September 1908 as the New Jersey State Normal School at Montclair. Over the decades, generations of students have passed through its doors as the school itself has grown into Montclair State, now New Jersey’s second-largest university.

“We knew we had something special with this building early in its renovation,” says Shawn Connolly, vice president for University Facilities.

Workers have also found notes on the attic walls from another era – wishing students a safe return from World War II – as well as a 1940s business card from a representative for the craftworkers labor union in Montclair.

The University is preparing an exhibit for the artifacts and a ceremony to honor the bricklayers’ families when College Hall reopens.

“We’re not sure if the masons who placed the message in the bottle ever thought it would be found. But it’s a time capsule of sorts, giving us a glimpse of the men who constructed the building,” Connolly says. “Now they and their families will forever be a part of our history.”

Research contributed by Lorraine Arnold; James Lennon family tree and photos were shared by his granddaughter’s paternal cousin, the former Phyllis Moore.

Photography by Mike Peters

WEB EXTRA:

Video by Christodoulos Apostolou.
<https://youtu.be/J8tXo7tjCLQ>



Left: Lorraine Arnold '11, a buildings archaeologist/genealogist, returned to her alma mater to see firsthand the College Hall renovations and to assist in the search for descendants of the bricklayers. She is shown with Sharon Mahoney, the University’s director of construction management. Right: Robert Kanaby, the demolition laborer who made the discovery, says the camaraderie between union members is strong. “Once you make a bond with someone, it’s almost a bond for life.”



TV and film production companies choose University for its scenery, students and services

BY MARY BARR MANN



In October, a production company for NJ Lottery chose the Red Hawk Diner at Montclair State University for a Holiday Scratch-Offs commercial shoot.



It was a scene you wouldn't expect in October, but there it was: the University's Red Hawk Diner, decked out for the holidays and covered in a blanket of gleaming faux snow.

A mini-van pulls up and several festive revelers pile out and excitedly hurry up the steps of the diner – all under the glare of bright production lights and studio cameras.

But they're not students: They're paid actors shooting a professional commercial for NJ Lottery Holiday Scratch-Offs – just one of many professional productions to film on campus and work with the School of Communication and Media's Broadcast and Media Operations facilities and services.

"The University is rich with a variety of locations for commercials and film projects," says Patricia Piroh, director of Production Services and Technology for Broadcast and Media Operations.

"We have a diner, Mission revival-style buildings, traditional-looking and contemporary dorms, indoor and outdoor pools, a fully functioning newsroom, film and TV studios – including the only fully integrated 4K studio available for rent in the Metropolitan New York area – athletic fields, you name it," says Piroh.

Requests for filming cross Piroh's desk regularly as she serves as point person for production companies seeking access to campus, while providing real-life

experience for students studying broadcast production.

"I see our services as an enhancement for those seeking to use the University as a location for their film or TV project," says Piroh. "Because the College of the Arts and Broadcast and Media Operations understand the needs of film projects and the flow of how securing locations happens, we have been able to streamline the process, and provide on-the-ground support. We coordinate with parking services, facilities, campus police and our administration to get the required permissions for shoots, so film producers don't have to. This makes production at the University very attractive. If you have a need, we can fill it."





Above left to right: A production company shot promotional video for Google at the studios on campus in fall 2018.

Right: Jonathan Padilla '19 (left) and Jakub Deptula '20 film an advertisement for a leading clothing company at the Red Hawk Diner on March 3, 2020.



Above: To view Montclair State University's iconic Red Hawk Diner in the NJ Lottery Holiday Scratch-Offs commercial, search "NJ Lotto Holiday Scratch Offs 2019" on YouTube.com.



As a result, the University is developing a reputation as an East Coast Hollywood. "Montclair State is widely acknowledged as the leader among all universities in New Jersey in its engagement with the burgeoning film and television industry here," says Daniel Gurskis, dean of the College of the Arts. While many are seeking location shoots at the University, Gurskis says this has also led to off-campus opportunities, such as "placing students on production crews for films like Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*."

Whenever possible, Piroh reports, Broadcast and Media Operations involves students as part of the crew: "I view location production activity on campus as an extension of the academic experience for students in the School of Communication and Media."

With the NJ Lottery Red Hawk Diner shoot, Kiler Weir '20 served as a production assistant for both Broadcast and Media Operations and the film crew.

"Working with the very talented professionals who produced the NJ Lottery

commercial, I learned many things that I could have never learned in a classroom," says Weir. "It was incredible watching the crew transform the diner into a winter holiday scene. Everyone wanted to be there and it made the whole experience one I would do again in a heartbeat."

It's not just that Montclair State has great locations, says Piroh. "We also provide expert service, and we have talented and eager students."

"It's a win-win-win." ■

RAISE YOUR VOICE

Allia Khalifeh '20 MA
Applied Linguistics

Montclair State University is a celebrated public research university that empowers students and faculty to reach new heights, giving them everything they need to go out, encounter the world and make it a better place.

Montclair State University

montclair.edu

College FOR Five

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN



The Povolo quintuplets, from left, Ashley, Masha, Michael, Marcus and Victoria

For many college-bound seniors, worries about paying tuition can temper the joy of being accepted. For the Povolo quintuplets of Totowa, New Jersey, those concerns were multiplied by five.

But that anxiety lifted when they accepted Montclair State University's offer of five Presidential Scholarships for high-achieving students – one for each sibling, Victoria, Masha, Ashley, Michael and Marcus. The offer also included grants and smaller merit scholarships that amount to a tuition-free four years for the family.

"Thank you, Montclair State, for allowing us this amazing opportunity and this special blessing," Victoria Povolo, the oldest quintuplet and the one who explored financial aid for all five with the University, said after accepting the offer.

Victoria's siblings and parents learned of the admissions offer at Passaic Valley High School in early February, when they thought they were meeting with guidance counselors to discuss financial aid but were instead met with a surprise by Rocky and a team from University Admissions.

"Your world can change in a moment," mused their mother, Silvia Povolo, wiping away tears after the offer sunk in at the reveal.



Silvia Povolo hugs Rocky at Montclair State's surprise reveal of the admissions offer for her quintuplets.

Paying for college has been a concern since their children were born on the Fourth of July, 2002.

"We worried about that a lot," recalls their father, Paolo Povolo. "We wondered, will we have to refinance the house? The last several months while they were applying to college have been so stressful."

The quints met the academic criteria for the University's Presidential Scholars Program, which rewards accomplished New Jersey students with a \$5,000-a-year scholarship and additional academic, research-driven and career-focused activities, as long as they maintain the required GPAs.

In addition to scholarships, the Presidential Scholars program offers meaningful academic experiences, including access to alumni mentors and internships, spring break community service, lectures and research opportunities.

"The Povolos are exactly the type of students we had in mind when the University began offering this generous financial support to New Jersey's most ambitious and determined students," says Jeff Gant, director of Undergraduate Admissions.

Montclair State also offers a variety of programs that fit the quints' needs. Victoria wants to be a forensic pathologist. Masha will study political science and plans to be a lawyer. Ashley dreams of teaching. Michael plans to study nutrition and food science. Marcus wants to be an accountant.

"Montclair State is the ideal option for us," says Victoria.

Each sibling had choices when it came to colleges and thought about splitting up. But in the end they wanted to stay together.

"There's a bond that I can't explain that is there," their mother says. "So even though they have their own lives, at the end of the day, everybody comes home." ■

Quints Commit!

New Jersey quintuplets will start in the fall as Montclair State Presidential Scholars

A TEACHER LIKE ME

Education program works to diversify the teacher pipeline, training more teachers of color to return to the schools where they grew up

BY MARILYN JOYCE LEHREN

A

s Deliris Diaz moves around the classroom, the first-year physics teacher checks calculations on the gravitational forces in space, encouraging students to trust their instincts. It's a life lesson, as well as one for the law of physics. At East Side High School in Newark, New Jersey, Diaz has a special understanding of how her students' world works and what it means when someone inspires you to shoot for the moon.

Diaz was a standout in science and valedictorian at East Side, taught by graduates of the Newark-Montclair Urban Teacher Residency. Today, that same program guides her teaching, with the residency among the grant-funded partnerships Montclair State University has forged to recruit and prepare teachers of color, and provide crucial support in the early years of teaching.

"We want to combat the social inequalities that we are seeing every day in our society," says Jennifer Robinson, executive director of the Center of Pedagogy. "So, we have a broader mission beyond just teaching students about subject matter. We want to make sure our students see themselves as moral agents who are going to provide their students with access to knowledge, opening doors and windows and opportunities."

Numerous studies have shown the benefits of a diverse teaching force, including higher academic performance, graduation rates and college enrollment when teachers share race, ethnicity or gender with their students. Yet with a majority of the New Jersey's public school students being students of color, just 16 percent of the state's teachers are teachers of color. The New Jersey Department of Education has set a goal of having the ranks of novice teachers – those teaching for four years or less – reflect the diversity of public school students by 2025.

Montclair State takes its role seriously. "We are really becoming more of a magnet for our students of color who are very interested in going into urban education and urban communities," Robinson says. "In some cases, these are students who've grown up in the community. In other cases, these are just students who see some of the inequities in education and want to give back, want to do more for those students."



Deliris Diaz, a first-year teacher at East Side High School in Newark, New Jersey, teaches physics in the same high school where she excelled as a student in science.

Newark Superintendent Roger León '96 MA, the district's first Latino schools chief, who himself grew up in the city, says he values the partnerships with Montclair State in diversifying the teaching workforce.



Jennifer Robinson, executive director of the Center of Pedagogy, says Montclair State takes its role seriously in recruiting, preparing, supporting and placing a diverse pool of teaching candidates in New Jersey schools.



Bettina Love, an educational scholar, appears at Montclair State as part of the Critical Urban Education Speaker Series. She was also a guest of the Teacher Academy, challenging ninth graders in Newark to reflect on what it means to teach for social justice.



INSPIRED TO LEAD CHANGE

"Growing up, there weren't a lot of teachers who looked like me," Diaz says. "So I would say that was the motivation for me to ask, 'What can I do to be invited in, to include my voice into this space?'"

Diaz switched careers from STEM research, earning her Master of Arts in Teaching in 2019 as part of the residency program. Diaz is seen as one of the best and brightest, winning a prestigious Knowles Teaching Fellowship, which supports early-career, high school mathematics and science teachers.

Reflecting on her first year during an interview in late February, Diaz says, "Although my students see me as a very young teacher, they often see me as a very relatable teacher, someone who understands and someone who's always pushing them to be the very best. That's what I was asking them in today's lesson – 'Are we okay? Are we going to do it? Can we do it?' – just to show them that physics is not so intimidating, that if you just give it a chance, you are more capable than what you let yourself be," Diaz says.

RAISING EXPECTATIONS

"That becomes icing on the cake, right?" observes Newark Superintendent Roger León, the district's first Latino schools chief, who himself grew up in the city. "You want to be able to tell a student, 'I've walked these halls, I've sat in that classroom.' It does make a dramatic difference."

León is in his second year as chief of schools (he earned his Master of Arts in Administration and Supervision from Montclair State in 1996) and has vowed to strengthen Newark schools by tapping the expertise of partner organizations. "Especially in youth culture today," he says, "a lot of the students have a belief system that a teacher can't understand what they are going through. But you may actually have lived in the same projects that they have lived in or have lived on the particular block that's closest to the school. They may have actually played in the same playground."

At a conference hosted by Montclair State for 300 high school students and guidance counselors, "Inspiring and Motivating a Diverse Teacher Workforce," workshops focused on ways to foster diversity and enhance creativity, collaboration and cultural competency.



Through research, Robinson says, "we've begun to realize that teachers of color are able to have higher expectations of all of their students. They also have a tendency to be able to address issues of racism that sometimes occurs in our schools and in our classrooms. They serve as cultural brokers, individuals who can help all of our teachers and all of our students understand what is going on in terms of an interaction or in terms of a learning style, and are able to build trusting relationships with their students."

TEACHER ACADEMY LAUNCHES

Last year, Montclair State was awarded a "Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline" grant from the New Jersey Department of Education. The grant provides funding to develop programs that recruit, prepare, support and place a diverse pool of teaching candidates in New Jersey schools.

At East Side and University high schools, a new Teacher Academy led by Associate Professor Mayida Zaal has introduced its first cohort of ninth graders to social justice education. By the time these first students are in 11th grade, they will be given the opportunity to take college-level courses, at no cost, which will apply toward a degree at Montclair State. The hope is that after receiving their teacher certifications, they will begin teaching careers supported by a collaborative induction plan in Newark Public Schools. Researchers will track their progression.

"What we're trying to do is open our students' eyes to understanding the ways in which they learn themselves and the ways in which the students around them learn," Robinson says. "We want them to see that our society isn't quite as democratic as we would want it to be, and that they as teachers have the opportunity, if they become teachers, to actually make a difference in the world they will live in, and particularly for the students they will eventually teach."

The Teacher Academy is being presented in collaboration with Newark Public Schools and the American Federation of Teachers. Students are being exposed to teaching experiences, including reading with kindergarten students, and special events.

In February, a visit by Bettina Love, an author and educational scholar, challenged students to reflect on what it means to teach for social justice. "I want to have a conversation with future teachers and teachers in the classroom right now about teaching black and brown children," Love said. "I want to argue that you can't teach us if you don't know our culture ... how dynamic our culture is, how rich our culture is. You can't teach us if you don't know us."

Love appeared as part of the Critical Urban Education Speaker Series, an event that brings leading national scholars to Montclair State. The program was organized by Associate Professor Bree Picower and Assistant Professor Tanya Maloney for Teaching and Learning.

FUTURE TEACHERS OF COLOR

As a student of color, Anastacia Ramkishun, a junior at Science Park High School in Newark, has seldom had teachers who share her cultural heritage. Now, as a high school junior with plans to become an English teacher, she's looking to change that narrative. "I feel I'll have a better understanding of diverse students, that they'll be more comfortable and open up to me," she says.

Ramkishun was among the 300 middle, high school and college students, as well as teachers and guidance counselors, attending a January conference "Inspiring and Motivating a Diverse Teacher Workforce," hosted by Montclair State. Throughout the day, the students took part in presentations and breakout sessions led by New Jersey's top educators. Reflecting on their own educational experience, they also shared indelible memories of teachers who inspired them.

"This is really about building community – and building community to make a world that works for everyone," said keynote speaker Micia Mosely, founding executive director of The National Equity Project. "It is my hope that when you go into teaching, or whatever you do, that you work to build a world that works for everyone." ■



Artist Pope.L tackles ‘Hunger, loss and ignorance abetted by language, grime, and the spirit of the tinkerer a la social justice’

Pope.L '78

STAYING HUNGRY

Pope.L '78, Whitney Biennial artist (2002) and Guggenheim Fellow (2004), was recently the subject of a trio of complementary New York City exhibitions organized by the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art and Public Art Fund. *Instigation, Aspiration, Perspiration* included representations of Pope.L's famous and grueling “crawls” – in which he drags himself around public places like Tompkins Square Park or the length of Broadway – and installations such as *Choir*, which takes on the Flint water crisis. Pope.L is a theater director, writer, painter, performer, humorist and, according to MoMA, a self-described “fisherman of social absurdity.” *The New York Times* calls his work “art-smart, streetwise,” mixing issues of “art, the body, language and race into thorny, mind-bending tangles.” Recently, Pope.L engaged in a Q & A with Staff Writer Mary Barr Mann. His answers may make you smile, wince – and think.

Montclair magazine: With three exhibitions *Instigation, Aspiration, Perspiration*, put on by MOMA, the Whitney and the Public Art Fund last fall, that's quite a trifecta for an artist. What was that like for you?

Pope.L: Working with one high profile art institution can be a test. Working with three, well – it was dandy.

MM: You've been a Guggenheim fellow, had other retrospectives, received grants and had much success. What has been the most satisfying aspect of your career?

Pope.L: I'm not sure that careers can be satisfying, at least not in art. In many ways, careers make you emptier. Maybe that in itself is a form of satisfaction? I'm not sure.

MM: What would you say are the biggest themes that run through your work?

Pope.L: Hunger, loss and ignorance abetted by language, grime, and the spirit of the tinkerer a la social justice.

MM: You are probably most famous for your crawls, some of which are particularly grueling. Which one stays with you the most and why?

Pope.L: Famous? Hmmm. I did a memorable crawl once across the cobblestones of the Charles Bridge in Prague. As I crawled, this Australian lady followed me, yelling at me at the top of her



How Much is that Nigger in the Window a.k.a. Tompkins Square Crawl, New York. 1991. © Pope.L. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. “No matter where I did crawls of that nature, I had people yelling at me and spitting on me. They seemed to always do this thing. You see a person – a black person in the street with a suit – it seemed to set black people off especially. I think it's a very hurtful sign to see that I had given up. Or that I was showing this, this weakness.”

lungs, demanding to know why I was crawling.

MM: The topics you tackle are deadly serious. Yet there is almost always some wry humor, a wink. You seem to be inviting the world in, not shutting people out. In a scene where art sometimes seems exclusive and exclusionary, what can you tell us about inclusivity? (You might guess: We're big on inclusivity here at Montclair State.)

Pope.L: Well, I am glad Montclair is big on inclusivity. When I attended it did not feel this way – there [were] only two black students in the art department and there [was] very little visible mixing on campus.

MM: Your work is thought provoking. What do you hope audiences take away from it?

Pope.L: I'll reply in terms of quantity: I hope they take as much as they can carry. I hope they are thieves and criminals about it.

MM: You graduated Montclair State University in 1978, the same year as Times Square Crawl. You'd already studied at Pratt and at the Whitney and were headed for Mason Gross. How

did Montclair State work into that brew that generated Times Square Crawl and your early work?

Pope.L: I was very lucky. The art department had great teachers: John Czerkowitz, Mac Adams, Leon De Leeuw, Peter Barnett, Ellen Mohammed, John Randolph Carter and Phillip Winters.

MM: What attracted you to Montclair State?

Pope.L: I had a friend who was already matriculating. He suggested I come here. He never graduated. Sometimes I miss him. We don't speak much now.

MM: Your work bleeds across genres – painting, performance, photography, film. Montclair State College of the Arts has grown considerably since your days here, particularly in theater, film, dance and musical arts. What message for art students and other aspiring artists today do you have?

Pope.L: Don't quit your day job. This is especially important after you get a tiny bit of success – if you have to quit then keep your day-job attitude. Stay hungry. And make sure that fame is only ever an appetizer.



The Great White Way: 22 miles, 9 years, 1 street, 2000-2009. © Pope.L. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. Pope.L crawled the entire length of Broadway in New York wearing a Superman suit. He told MoMA that his aunt introduced him to Superman when he was young, and it dawned on him that the super suit was the next step after crawling in a business suit. People will “talk to you differently when they're standing up over the top of you. They think they're like instant superiority. Except in this case, I have the super suit.”



Choir, 2019, © Pope.L. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. This installation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, expands on Pope.L's “ongoing exploration and use of water.” According to Pope.L, “Water expresses gravity like no other material, it takes the shape of the container ... it goes where it's needed.” However, in cases such as the drinking fountains in the Jim Crow South, “with man's intervention, I guess it does not.”

Pope.L, formerly known as William Pope.L, has recently had quite the New York Moment, with exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Public Art Fund. (Photo © Pope.L. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.)

Broadway actor and
alumnus finds a home and
a hit show on Nickelodeon



Blue's Clues & Josh Dela Cruz

BY MARY BARR MANN

Josh Dela Cruz on the "set" of
Blue's Clues & You! Courtesy
of Nickelodeon.

When Nickelodeon's breakout hit children's show *Blue's Clues* (1996-2006) returned as the rebooted *Blue's Clues & You!* last fall, some wondered whether this sweet and occasionally silent show from the pre-smartphone era could succeed amidst the noise of the "digital age."

The answer – with the dynamic Josh Dela Cruz '11 as the human sidekick to cartoon puppy Blue – is a resounding, "Yes!"



Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon

The show ranked No. 1 among preschool shows in its first week, and a second season was ordered just eight days after its November 11, 2019, debut.

According to critics, one big reason for its wild success is Dela Cruz, whose musical theater chops and natural charm spring from the screen while pulling viewers in.

"He is a good singer!" says 3-year-old Mira, a fan of the show from Millburn, New Jersey, who also likes that "Josh" built a block tower for Blue and his puppy

friend Magenta when they were sad. Mira's mom, Jennifer DiDomenico, says Mira is "obsessed with this show."

And the appeal crosses age groups. Jessica Fox, a mother of two from Maplewood, New Jersey, reports: "Both my kids love him! And so do I!"

After graduating from Montclair State with a degree in Musical Theatre, Dela Cruz found success in the New York/Broadway theater scene, playing Lun Tha across from Lou Diamond Phillips and Rachel Bay

Jones in *The King and I*, earning roles in the David Lynch/Fatboy Slim collaboration *Here Lies Love* and Stephen Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along*, and working as an ensemble cast member and understudy for the lead in the Disney hit *Aladdin*.

But, as a Filipino American, Dela Cruz says he initially didn't envision himself on television. "I never experienced seeing somebody like me on TV growing up. That definitely does play a part in why maybe I never even saw myself on television – or even mainstream media."

He credits Montclair State with helping him embrace his identity.

"The Theatre and Dance department took me in and put me in plays which I had never done," Dela Cruz says, noting that he was cast in roles typically reserved for white actors – from Heinrich von Kleist's *The Prince of Homburg* and Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, to Ken Ludwig and George Gershwin's *Crazy for You*.

"It didn't matter what I looked like. I don't know if I would be the performer I am today

"I don't know if I would be the performer I am today and as accepting of my identity if it hadn't been for Montclair State."

–Josh Dela Cruz

and as accepting of my identity – which has led to my success – if it hadn't been for Montclair State."

Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance Clay James says Dela Cruz made the most of his education: "Josh was the kind of student who, right from the start, took full advantage of everything that Montclair State University has to offer, in terms of professional training and performance opportunity."

Critics have lauded Dela Cruz's performance on *Blue's Clues & You!* and

have noted that he represents both an opportunity for Asian American children to feel seen and for children in general to have an Asian American role model. The show is going all in on Dela Cruz's Filipino identity: Season 2 will introduce Josh's lola (Tagalog for grandma), played by actor and jazz performer Carolyn Fe.

Meanwhile, Josh is embracing his new role as not just an entertainer – but as an educator. *Blue's Clues & You!* is fun, but at its core, it's educational television a la *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*.



Josh Dela Cruz with Blue at Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade 2019. Courtesy of Nickelodeon

The show focuses on social-emotional issues, pre-math, pre-reading, science and preschool rituals in a fun way (with a game of solving a mystery) and in a comfortable setting with repetition and songs to increase both enjoyment and retention. According to NickJr.com: "Everyone is invited to play with Blue, a pre-school aged puppy with a clue ... three, actually! Each day, Blue leaves paw prints on three objects around her house to communicate what activity she wants to do. Josh, Blue's excited new caregiver and friend, looks for the paw prints and works to figure out Blue's message ... but he can only solve Blue's Clues with the help of YOU!"

A new generation of young viewers help Blue by answering questions posed by Dela Cruz who then waits silently, giving children at home time to think and respond to their television screens. To end the silence, Josh brightly announces, "Right!" "Great, thanks!" or "You know what to do!"

Dela Cruz brings warmth and realism to his performance despite acting it all out in front of a green screen on a sound stage in Toronto, with a laser light standing in for Blue. As the show's lead human performer, he spent seven months in Toronto filming the first season, and returned for another six months to film the second season. Dela Cruz says the educational component to the performance is a natural fit, and credits Montclair State for not only training him as a performer, but fostering his love of teaching.

"While I was in *Aladdin*, I taught a senior workshop for Montclair State Musical Theatre students," he recalls.

Dela Cruz says that he and his wife, musical theater professional (Broadway's *Jersey Boys*) Amanda Phillips '11, have both "fallen in love with teaching" and hope to come back to Montclair State to work with students in theatre and dance classes. "The fact that Montclair State gave me an opportunity to come

back after I worked out in the world professionally, I can't thank them enough. Now I get to help kids with *Blue's Clues & You!* It's amazing."

"Josh and Amanda weren't afraid to put in the time and did the work far beyond what was expected of them," says James. "I am so proud of what they have accomplished professionally and thrilled that they are now paying it forward by inspiring current performance students through their master classes and guest teaching opportunities."

Dela Cruz says the University made it all possible for an immigrant kid to realize his dreams.

"We lived a modest middle class life. I remember looking up schools for musical theatre, and tuition per year was what my dad made," he says. "I'm so thankful that I don't have student debt. Having an affordable place to study is something I treasure and so appreciate as well as having a good quality education." ■

RED HAWKS ATHLETICS

FAR AFIELD

BY ANDREW MEES

ATHLETES AND COACHES

STAY CONNECTED REMOTELY

BY THE POWER OF TEAM DYNAMICS

For student-athletes, game day is the reward. It's what players and teams train for – and what makes the early-morning conditioning sessions and studying for exams on late-night bus rides worth it.

But what happens when players suddenly can no longer take the field? When, in a split second, a season – and for some, a college career – is over due to the most unprecedented of circumstances?

For Montclair State University's athletic teams, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a sudden halt to the 2020 campaign before champions could be crowned, records could be broken, and career milestones could be achieved.

What could have been the end proved to be the beginning for Montclair

State's 18 men's and women's teams, as Red Hawk players, coaches and administrators came together to showcase the qualities that make Division III athletics special.

"This has been an extraordinary situation for everyone, everywhere," says Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Rob Chesney. "Our department has taken it in stride, and I've been really proud to see the resiliency of our players, coaches and staff, and to see everyone come together to get through this as best we can."

STUDENT-ATHLETES, COACHES HELP EACH OTHER COPE

Spring sports teams, the ones most impacted by the pandemic, each dealt with the end of the season in their own ways.

For the baseball team, it was a commitment to making the best of the situation – and having the proper perspective that what was taking place in the world was bigger than the game.

"It was certainly disappointing, because we had gotten off to a really good start, and had come together as a team on our trip to Maryland during spring break," says first-year head coach Dave Lorber. "Traveling back home, we didn't really have the chance to hold a team meeting to let our players know what was happening moving forward because campus had been closed."

The team instituted group calls via Zoom to stick together, but the message among the group and its coaching staff remained a constant.



RED HAWKS ATHLETICS

"I've tried to instill in our players that we are a piece of a much larger puzzle," says Lorber. "What's going on right now is bigger than baseball. Things may not always go the way you want in life, but you can always control how you respond. Our players chose to make the best of it as best they could."

That meant committing to finishing the semester on a strong note academically,

with nearly the entire team posting a better GPA in the spring semester than in the fall.

"I'm so proud of our players – especially our seniors – for how they have responded and never wavered," says Lorber. "It's a testament to their resilience."

For the softball team, honoring the program's five seniors – pitcher Kiara Ruiz, pitcher Nicole Majewski, infielder Elena Radesich, infielder/outfielder Blake Saperstein, and pitcher Valentina Cucci – with a digital Senior Day ceremony on YouTube and Zoom, just as if they'd been on the field, kept an annual tradition unique to college sports alive.

Using family photos, action shots of the players on the field and an official presentation, the video tribute provided a virtual send-off and acknowledgement of accomplishments both on the field and in the classroom.

"I thought it was great that, even though we were graduating and not really part of the team anymore, that the department made sure we got a Senior Day," says Saperstein. "It says a lot about the staff and our coaches that they still wanted us to have all of the same opportunities that seniors under normal circumstances would have."

FINDING THE BRIGHTER SIDE

Student-athletes even teamed up to produce video content for the department's official website, montclairathletics.com.

Attempting to settle the age-old debate of North Jersey vs. South Jersey, two Red Hawks – senior softball player Saperstein, from Livingston, and senior women's lacrosse player Sydnee Sapp, from Mount Laurel – went head-to-head to answer questions such as, "Is it Pork Roll or Taylor Ham?" and "Does Central Jersey exist?"

"Blake and I are good friends, and we've all been trying our best to stay in touch during this time," says Sapp. "The Athletic Department has been going so far above

and beyond to make all of us seniors not only still feel included, but keep us engaged and have as much fun as we can, even if it's a fun video like this, with our friends on other teams. It's definitely brought some light to all of us, and we are all so appreciative of all they've done."

Teams also took to social media to engage in activities that highlighted their bonds.

Montclair State's field hockey team also found a way to stay active and raise the awareness of social distancing with the viral "Toilet Paper Challenge." In their Instagram video, teammates show off their skills virtually passing a roll of toilet paper from player to player. Creative editing combines their video clips to make the play seamless.

"We've been trying to do little things just to keep everyone motivated and doing stuff to get our sticks in our hands, even if it is with toilet paper," says Keeley Winn, a senior majoring in Family Science and Human Development.

"It was so funny to see what my teammates could come up with – running backwards on a treadmill, adding pet goats to the scene" Winn recalls. "And it was nice to 'be together' without being together, if that makes sense."

The players on the field hockey team also sent baby pictures to their coach to post on the team's Instagram story. "It is important to keep the dynamic of the team strong during these times and keep the spirits high," Winn says.

DIVISION III WEEK, SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS GO VIRTUAL

Each year, NCAA Division III institutions celebrate Division III Week, in which student-athletes are honored for their achievements both on and off the field.

Typically highlighted by an event to commemorate National Student-Athlete Day, the department's Student



Montclair State's Athletic department highlighted every senior student-athlete with "Senior Spotlight" stories on its official website, montclairathletics.com.



Development team ensured players would still receive awards including honors for the 3.0 GPA Club, Dean's List, Scholar-Athlete Team and induction in the National College Athlete Honor Society.

Arranging for a series of events over the course of Division III Week, the daily virtual broadcasts were highlighted via Instagram each day of the week and corresponding stories on the department's website, with more than 250 student-athletes receiving honors as part of the initiative.

"As a parent of a senior, I am devastated for these students," says Tara Rienecker, assistant athletic director of student development for athletes. "Everything they know is different. The experience they thought they would have, never happened. Although doing a virtual event is in no way the same, we wanted the students to know they are important, not forgotten and will overcome and thrive. We use the phrase in Athletics #RedHawk4Life, and they will forever be remembered and part of our Red Hawk family."

Coaches and administrators also found a way to continue the long-standing tradition

of honoring student-athletes whose careers were concluding.

They showcased each graduating spring athlete in stories at montclairathletics.com titled "Senior Spotlights," which included career highlights, personal question-and-answer sections and testimonials about why each player decided to attend the University.

"I chose Montclair State because I did not want to go far away for college and it was the perfect distance from home, 1.5 hours," said women's track and field student-athlete Samantha Miller. "My neighbor also graduated from Montclair State and recommended I check it out, and once I knew I could run here, I was all in."

At some point, the Red Hawks will once again take the field and compete for New Jersey Athletic Conference championships and berths in the NCAA Tournament. But the student-athletes who experienced the spring of 2020 will take away lessons that will last a lifetime and bonds, forged in adversity, that will be stronger than ever.

"Our teams are preparing for their upcoming seasons as best we can right

now," says Chesney, "but I fully expect everyone to not only be ready when games are allowed, but for our teams and department to be stronger than ever because of these experiences." ■

Staff Writer Marilyn Lehren contributed to this story.

Field hockey sophomore midfielder Katelyn Osterlind joined teammates for the "Toilet Paper Challenge," a social media initiative to promote social distancing during the pandemic.



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CONNECTIONS

ALUMNI & FRIENDS



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AND SPEAKER AWARDS 2020

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New endowment will fund arts and arts education at Kasser Theater

When Mary Mochary – then Mary Kasser – and her older brother Michael were living in Montclair and attending College High School at Montclair State in the 1950s, their parents sometimes sent them into New York City to see world-class performances.

“My parents had season tickets to the Metropolitan Opera and a few times they sent Mary and me,” recalls Michael Kasser. “They’d take us to the corner at Valley Road and put us onto the bus to New York.”

Fast forward to the present day, and the Kasser kids have brought world-class performances back to that Valley Road bus stop. Or pretty darn close.

In 2002, Michael and Mary, along with Mary’s daughter Alex Mochary Kasser and her son Matthew Mochary, made a joint gift of \$4 million to name the Alexander Kasser Theater after Mary and Michael’s late father, an engineer, international philanthropist, art lover and one-time Montclair resident. Now, Mary and Michael have made another generous gift to create the Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, to enhance the Theater’s vibrant future as a cultural resource in advancing the arts and arts education.

The siblings’ support for the Kasser Theater is a continuation of their parents’ legacy. Alexander and Elisabeth Kasser fled communism to build a successful new life in America. They loved music and art and were devoted to the civic sphere and humanitarianism. While in Hungary during WWII, Alexander – who managed the largest paper mill in Eastern Europe – worked to save thousands of Jews. He received the Righteous Among the Nations award from the State of Israel in 1998.



Mary Mochary '59 and I. Michael Kasser '56
College High School at
Montclair State

After fleeing Hungary in 1947, the Kasser family ultimately settled in Montclair so that Michael and Mary could attend College High School, a competitive, tuition-free demonstration school at Montclair State where professors modeled teaching for students training as educators. (College High School was located in what is now Morehead Hall from 1927 to 1973.)

“My parents were highly educated,” explains Mary. “Education was very important to them. We recognized as immigrants there was nothing more important to bring with you than your education. You can lose your money, your property, everything, but you always have your education.”

Michael went on to earn a bachelor’s in engineering and a master’s in chemical engineering from MIT, a doctorate in engineering at the University of Grenoble (France) and an MBA at Harvard Business School, leading to successful careers in manufacturing, finance and venture capital.

Mary earned a BA in economics from Wellesley College and a JD from the University of Chicago Law School. In 1980, she was elected mayor of Montclair and ran for the U.S. Senate in 1984, losing to Bill Bradley after she was compelled to stop campaigning due to her husband’s illness. Mary then worked for the State Department during the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations as Principal Deputy Legal

Advisor to the Secretary of State and Special Negotiator for Real Estate with the rank of ambassador.

Mary and Michael both remain active philanthropists: He in Arizona and she in Washington, D.C., and Palm Beach, Florida. Mary’s work included serving as a member of the board of directors of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Michael has served on the board of the Tucson Museum of Art, among others, and played a vital role in saving the Arizona Theatre Company.

Both are devoted to the success of the Kasser Theater.

“The University has done such a good job with the theater,” says Mary, who credits President Susan A. Cole’s vision and ability to recruit cutting-edge leadership such as Obie Award-winning Arts and Cultural Programming Executive Director Jedediah Wheeler. “I believe the Kasser Theater has made an enormous difference. And the programming has been terrific.”

kassermocharyfoundation.org

–Mary Barr Mann

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FOSTERING SUCCESS

As Deborah Fish Ragin retires, she leaves a legacy to help foster-care children attend college and graduate



To help students overcome struggles, Deborah Fish Ragin, retiring after 17 years as a professor of psychology, has given a \$100,000 gift to support the Red Hawk Fellows program.

It's not always easy to know what students have been going through when they enter the classroom. For many, the struggle is real, whether it's having enough to eat or having a place to live. For students who have grown up in foster care, the obstacles are especially challenging.

"When in foster care, there's no primer on what to do," says Psychology Professor Deborah Fish Ragin.

Their challenges have inspired Ragin as she retires from Montclair State to give a faculty gift of \$100,000 to Red Hawk Fellows, a support program for foster youth and other undergraduates who are homeless, legally separated from parents or independent.

The gift reflects Ragin's mission to help these struggling students as a personal tribute to her father, John Fish. "I am a daughter of a man who was in foster care, not once, but twice," Ragin says.

The John A. and Juanita M. Fish Red Hawk Fellows Endowed Fund will enable the program to expand services to about 160 undergraduates who come to Montclair State from the child welfare system, giving them the best chance possible to transition and succeed in college.

The support has made a world of difference to students like Chris Pritti, a sophomore studying for a BFA in Filmmaking. Pritti says the emotional toll of moving from home to home, custody battles, and losing people he was close to, nearly uprooted his life.

Now 19 years old, Pritti says he's found strength as a college student with clear goals to graduate, to pay off his student loans, and to share his story through film. "I want to shed light on family problems that don't get covered," he says. "As a teenager, people think life hasn't hit them yet. You don't know half of it."

Data shows that young people transitioning from foster care are less likely to earn college degrees. They lack money to apply and pay for college. There's no one to turn to for help in filling out applications, securing financial aid and choosing a school. Many have missed extended periods of time from school or changed schools, leaving them behind academically. They may not have anywhere to stay during summers and other college breaks.

"During the holidays, where do you go? There is no home," Ragin says.

And it's not just the students in foster care who struggle. Ragin was inspired to act after meeting with a student who told her the reason he was having difficulty concentrating was because he was hungry.

"That was my clarion wake-up call. I began to question my assumptions about student performance and what was keeping students from performing. Why didn't I see it?" she says.



Deborah Fish Ragin holds a photograph of her father, John A. Fish, who spent part of his childhood in foster care.

"It's a hidden problem, but not so hidden when you begin to scratch the surface," Ragin says. "I'm glad I see it now."

As Ragin became more attuned to the obstacles students were facing, she became a bridge between students' needs and campus resources, says Associate Dean of Students Yolanda Alvarez. "She gave her best as a faculty member. Now she's leaving her best in retirement."

Ragin says her father was firmly committed to education and instilled that within his four children. "This gift is my way of paying it forward for kids who, like my dad, face unique hardships in foster care that the average student does not have to encounter."

Montclair State is making strides in improving educational outcomes for foster youth

and others experiencing homelessness or who do not have adult support.

In January 2019, the University hired Durell Clark as a student support services case manager to work solely with vulnerable students through Red Hawk Fellows. He brings an understanding of both the child protection system and mentoring to help students stay on track academically and work through personal and emotional challenges.

Pritti says the support he has received has helped him find and maintain a job and to live on campus. "I've become a more spiritual person," he says. "I meditate daily, eat healthy. I stay on top of my grades, my money and my film."

Ragin's gift will allow the Red Hawk Fellows to expand support for academics and life skills,

including money management, year-round housing opportunities, career planning services and cultural opportunities.

"Her generosity to the Red Hawk Fellows program is a great testament to her belief in public higher education for all qualified students who desire the opportunities it provides, regardless of their backgrounds," says Vice President for Development Colleen Coppla.

Ragin is retiring to devote more time to writing and her work with the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, which serves as a consultant to the UN Economic and Social Council. "Her gift is an inspiration to many, including the students whose lives she is helping to transform," Coppla says.

—Marilyn Joyce Lehren

A DAY AT THE NEW JERSEY DEVILS

In what has become a favorite annual winter event, the Office of Alumni Engagement hosted Montclair State Alumni Day at Prudential Center on February 22. Alumni and friends enjoyed a pregame reception at the GRAMMY Museum Experience, and some exciting hockey as the New Jersey Devils defeated the Washington Capitals.



HONORING EMERITI FACULTY

In fall 2019, 14 faculty members – Janet Cutler, Mark Hubey, Tina Jacobowitz, Agatha Jeffers, Lorraine Katterhenry, Michael Kruge, Jay Livingston, Tzu Chiang Ernest Ma, Luis Montesinos, Ruth Rendleman, Susana Sotillo, David Townsend, Nilufer Usman and Debra Zellner – were named professors emeriti during the University Board of Trustees meeting and were honored at a luncheon hosted by Alumni Engagement.



PRESIDENT'S CLUB RECEPTION

On February 8, members of the President's Club, Montclair State's leadership giving society, gathered for the inaugural President's Club Reception in recognition of their support of the University. President Susan A. Cole thanked them for their continued commitment to the University. The event, held in the George Segal Gallery, featured an exhibition celebrating the career of Klaus Schnitzer, long-time photography professor, was followed by a performance by the Shanghai Quartet in the Kasser Theater.



Anthony '82, '85 MA and Roseanne Passaforo Scriffignano '84 at the reception

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT EMERGENCY FUND

This is an unprecedented time for the world and our community. Now, more than ever, many of our students are relying on our support through the Montclair State Student Emergency Fund to continue their education as we weather this crisis together.

Your support shows our students that we are a community that will rise to the occasion to support their success. Together we can make a difference!

All donations to the Montclair State Student Emergency Fund will directly support our students as they adapt to changing circumstances through emergency scholarships.

To support the **Student Emergency Fund**, visit crowdfund.montclair.edu/student-emergency-fund or contact the Office of Annual Giving at **973-655-4141** or giving@montclair.edu.

Students in need of assistance should contact the Dean of Students office at **973-655-4118** or **973-655-7548**.

GIVING DAY



MONEY RAISED

\$83,100

Supports emergency scholarships and ensures that our students have access to laptops



NUMBER OF DONORS

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ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OUR STUDENTS

We asked and you answered! Alumni and friends came together to share a message of encouragement for our students. Thank you for your videos, photos and messages using the hashtag **#MontclairStateCares**.

"We are happy to help the students at Montclair State University as they are the generation who will lead us forward as we recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic in the years ahead."

KATHY DUNLAP '76

"... Know you are not alone. Take time for your mental and physical well-being. Stay a distance apart, as calm as possible, and move forward."

JANICE DEANGELIS '77, '81 MA

"Hang in there. This will soon be a distant memory. We are in this together."

MELISSA NASH '13

"Hang in there Red Hawks! There is light at the end of the tunnel, and when this passes you will come out stronger than ever and ready to take on the world. Our alumni network is 130,000 strong and has your back. We are all in this together."

JONATHAN '10, '12 MBA AND ARIELLE '12 PRECIADO

You can share a message of encouragement for our students by posting a short video, photo or written message on social media using the hashtag **#MontclairStateCares** to offer words of encouragement and to show our students that they are surrounded by a strong, supportive community committed to their success. If you don't have social media, you can email your message of support to alumni@montclair.edu.

MONTCLAIR STATE TAKES ON FLORIDA

With more than 5,000 alumni living in Florida, the Office of Alumni Engagement provides opportunities for alumni and friends living in the Sunshine State to connect with each other and the University. If you are interested in joining the West Coast Florida alumni chapter, please contact Karen Hackett in the Office of Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement at [973-655-4207](tel:973-655-4207) or hackettk@montclair.edu.



Alumni living in or around Sarasota attended a luncheon reception filled with music and camaraderie on March 5, hosted by John Schmidt, former chairman of the Montclair State Foundation Board, and wife, Mayra Schmidt, who are University benefactors. The gathering took place at the Sarasota Yacht Club, where guests had the opportunity to meet and chat with President Susan A. Cole.



Altair M. Gobo '74 and wife Maria Gobo hosted a gathering at the Boca Highland Club & Marina in Highland Beach on March 3. Alumni spent the evening with University leadership, including Daniel Gurskis, dean of the College of the Arts, and enjoyed a special performance by the accomplished musicians of Zorá, the John J. Cali School of Music Graduate String Quartet-in-Residence.



Alumni gathered on March 6 for a New York Yankees spring training game in Tampa, where the Yankees took on the Baltimore Orioles at Steinbrenner Field for an evening filled with baseball, food and networking.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AND DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER AWARD RECIPIENTS 2020

Congratulations to our newest class of distinguished alumni and friends for 2020. Join us as we celebrate these distinguished honorees who were selected based on personal accomplishments, professional achievements, community service involvement and support of the mission of Montclair State University. Learn more about the honorees at our Alumni Engagement website.



College of the Arts: Andrew Freeman '84 – named as one of the Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Sales and Marketing by the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International, Freeman is the founder of af&co, a lifestyle marketing and media relations firm.



College of Education and Human Services: Dr. Wamwari Waichungo '90 – as vice president responsible for Global Scientific & Regulatory Affairs at The Coca-Cola Company, she leads the company's efforts to evaluate and substantiate the safety and efficacy of ingredients for more than 3,500 products worldwide.



College of Humanities and Social Sciences: Joseph '62, '65 MA and Marie Bagnato Attanasio '65 – Joseph S. Attanasio is emeritus professor of speech-language pathology in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Montclair State. Marie Bagnato Attanasio retired from secondary school teaching after a total of 25 years and spent 14 years teaching ESL and basic skills training.



College of Science and Mathematics: Dr. Erika Hamden – an astrophysicist and role model for STEM professionals, Hamden's research focuses on measuring and mapping diffuse hydrogen around other galaxies and within star-forming regions in our own galaxy.



Feliciano School of Business: Michele Ansbacher '80 – former corporate vice president in the Eastern Territory of Prudential Advisors, Ansbacher was named among the 2019 Top 25 Entrepreneurs/Intrapreneurs in New Jersey by Leading Women Entrepreneurs (LWE).



School of Nursing: John Fromhold – chief executive officer of Hackensack UMC Mountainside. Since 2007, Fromhold has played an instrumental role in overseeing the hospital's transformation.

LAUNCHING THE MONTCLAIR STATE WOMEN'S INITIATIVE NETWORK (WIN)

The Office of Alumni Engagement has created the **Women's Initiative Network (WIN)** to engage the University's nearly 85,000 alumnae in the intellectual, cultural and educational life of the University.

"We are looking to form a vibrant community of alumnae and friends to inspire and empower women to become leading volunteers and visionary donors and are excited to create this community and grow a supportive network," says Jeanne Marano, assistant vice president for Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement.

If you are interested in joining the network or serving on the planning committee, please complete a brief survey at surveymonkey.com/r/MSUWIN to tell us a little bit about yourself, your interests and thoughts on developing future activities.



"Join us as we embark on this journey. We are looking for representation across all professional disciplines and from every career stage from senior executives to young professionals to entrepreneurs," Marano explains.

The objective of the group is to increase the number of women meaningfully engaged through a strong network in University programs, empower the next generation of leaders and strengthen ties between and among alumnae and the University.

Three roundtable discussions were held in March, where alumnae talked about some of the barriers faced in their careers, the positive forces that moved them toward success, and how WIN can provide meaningful opportunities to share ideas and support, and inspire one another. Some future program ideas include mentoring programs, career resources, leadership development and professional networking. Additional sessions will be held so be sure to complete the survey to receive your invitation to participate.

"We plan to tap into the extensive experience of Montclair State's accomplished alumnae/i to provide networking and learning opportunities designed to empower women to realize their career goals and to increase the number of women meaningfully engaged with the University," adds Marano. "Whether you are located close to campus or far away, please let us know your interest so that we can look for in-person and online engagement opportunities."

Show your support! Complete the survey and check your email for invitations to roundtables and activities to continue the discussion.

If you would like additional information regarding the Women's Initiative Network, please contact Jeanne Marano at maranoj@montclair.edu or [973-655-4141](tel:973-655-4141).

REMINISCE. RECONNECT. REDISCOVER 50TH AND 50+ REUNION CELEBRATIONS



Because of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the 50th Reunion Celebration for the Class of 1970 will be celebrated in May 2021. The reunion committee, in partnership with the Office of Alumni Engagement, is hard at work planning activities. Reunion is a great opportunity to rediscover your alma mater and reconnect with classmates and friends. All alumni having graduated 50 or more years ago are encouraged to join the celebration.

For information about next year's reunion activities, contact Karen Hackett, Office of Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement, at [973-655-4207](tel:973-655-4207) or hackettk@montclair.edu.

1970 Montclair State Football Team to Celebrate 50th Reunion

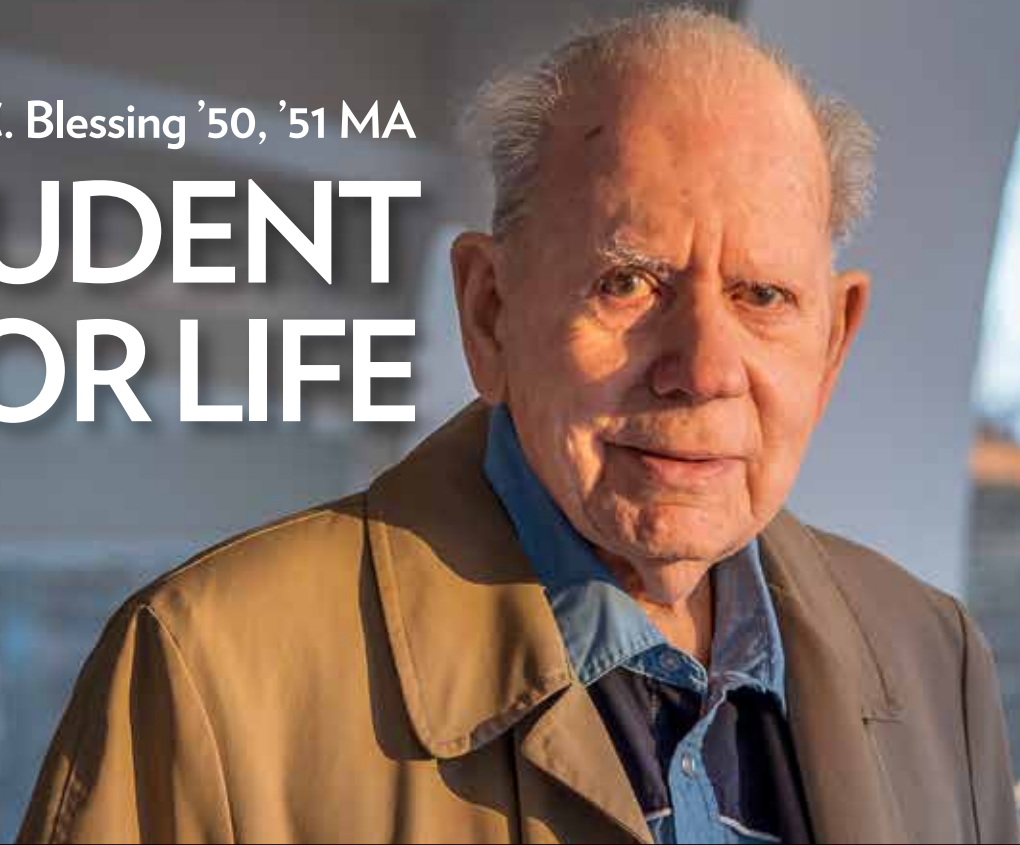


It has been 50 years since the memorable 1970 football season at what was then Montclair State College. In 1970, the team completed a 8-1 regular season and celebrated their second consecutive NJAC Title. The team then played in the postseason Knute Rockne Bowl in Atlantic City, securing a 7-6 victory over Hampden Sydney College and bringing home the trophy. In celebration of that accomplishment, the 1970 football team -- and former players -- will be honored during Homecoming 2020 (to be confirmed). More details to follow.

For more information, contact the Kara Baldwin Brennan '92, Office of Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement, at [973-655-7492](tel:973-655-7492) or brennanka@montclair.edu.

Leonard C. Blessing '50, '51 MA

STUDENT FOR LIFE



When Leonard Blessing attended Montclair State on the G.I. Bill after serving in the Air Force during World War II, the campus boasted 800 students and three buildings. Now, the Veterans housing that he and his wife Frances lived in is long gone and the campus is completely transformed, but Blessing isn't nostalgic.

The award-winning Millburn High School science teacher and nationally recognized educator (long-since retired) never lost touch with his alma mater and continues to visit campus two or three times monthly for concerts, lectures and donor events, driving from his home in New Providence, New Jersey. At 99, curiosity and a forward-looking interest still propel Blessing, now as ever.

He left a promising career at Prudential in 1947 to pursue a science degree at Montclair State, followed quickly with a master's in Science Education. Becoming

an educator led to a personally enriching career that took him and his family around the world through his leadership in science education conferences in France and Russia and on teaching sabbaticals in England.

"It changed my life," says Blessing of his college experience. "Montclair State and Millburn High School are written across my heart."

At home, Blessing pushed the envelope with high school science. "He recognized the importance of conservation and ecology in the '50s," explains his daughter Leslee Mabee '76. "He saw the value of having an electron microscope in the high school science program in the early '70s, and the need for a computer in the department in the early '80s." Meanwhile, "throughout his career, he continued to tap into the strong relationships he had developed with Montclair State faculty and students," says Mabee.

In his spare time, Blessing played piano, contract bridge, wrote poetry and short fiction, performed research and coached basketball, chess and track. He continues to play piano pre-service on Sundays at New Providence United Methodist Church, and plays and teaches contract bridge a few times a week. He will be installed in the Millburn High School Athletics Hall of Fame this April.

And he stays active at Montclair State, as a member of the 1908 Loyalty Society and as an appreciator of the arts and humanities. He has been excited to see the University grow while supporting its mission of providing affordable quality education to students who reflect the world.

"I've been an internationalist since I was a teenager. I'm glad to see so many foreign-born students at Montclair State. To see it opening the doors to the world for them as it did for me."

It's a world in which Blessing is still very much a part.

"He remains a consummate student, researcher, teacher, leader and friend," says daughter Leslee. "At 99, he is still filled with optimism and idealism and will always be a romanticist at his core. A more honorable and truthful man could not be found."

Leslee and her older sister Lynn Smith both live in North Carolina but check in on Blessing regularly. His wife Frances passed away in 2016. "Seventy-three years married – I was lucky," says Blessing.

Although his daughters have suggested he relocate to North Carolina and friends in Florida want him to move there, he stays put.

"Here in New Jersey, I'm somebody. I'm involved."

—Mary Barr Mann

1950s

Leonard C. Blessing '50, '51 MA celebrated his 99th birthday with his family. He remains an avid reader of *Montclair* magazine and still regularly attends concerts and lectures at the University. On October 14, Leonard and daughters, Leslee Mabee '76 and Lynn Smith, visited campus for a tour. See profile facing page. **1**

1960s

Nettie Thomas '63, '85 MA joined sculptor and assemblage artist Willie Cole on stage at the Montclair Public Library for a discussion of Cole's life and work in a key event of MPL's African American History Month slate of activities. She has served on the Board of Directors at the 1978 Maplewood Arts Center, The George Segal Gallery at Montclair State University and Pen + Brush, where she also serves as president.

Jacqueline Seewald '66 wrote her 20th novel, a mystery titled *Blood Family*, which was released in May 2019. She is now a retired teacher and writes full time.

Thomas Hudak '67, '73 MA and **Carlyn Hudak '67** celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a family cruise to Bermuda in August 2019. **2**

1970s

Kathleen Stein-Smith '72, associate librarian and director of public services at Fairleigh Dickinson University, was named a Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques (Order of Academic Palms) by the French government.

Michael Skutinsky '73 has retired and is now living in Florida after 25 years of working on Wall Street and five years of running his own consulting firm. **3**

John Ford '74, '78 MA taught 34 years at Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark, N.J. In May 2019, he was inducted into the Hall Of Fame for Distinguished Faculty.

Sharon Griffin Mullen '74 was elected president of the American Association of University Women for the Sussex County (N.J.) branch. In addition, she was elected vice president of the Sussex County Retired Educators Association.

Gordon S. Pingicer '74 was appointed to the Finance Committee and the Audit and Compliance Committee of Hackensack Meridian Health.

Kathleen Ragan '74, '80 MA retired as associate vice president for Student Development and Campus Life at Montclair State. In September 2019, colleagues and friends gathered to honor Ragan with a retirement party on campus. Former classmates and roommates, **Sam Crane '74, Vicki Baldauf Goralski '76, Sharon Makatenas Szabo '76, Maureen O'Rourke Krauter '76, Maryanne Preztunik '77** and **Joan Schulhafer Cooper '81** also attended. **4**

Linda Vecchio '74 retired from her position as program coordinator for internships and work-study at Western Suffolk BOCES in Dix Hills, N.Y.

Franklin Walker '74 was appointed superintendent of the Jersey City (N.J.) Public Schools.

Michael Gabriele '75 published his fourth book on New Jersey history titled *Stories from New Jersey Diners – Monuments to Community*.

Joe Cosentino '77 added two more books to his Nicky and Noah mystery series: *Drama Dance* and *Drama Faerie*.

Rose Gabriele '77 has launched a consulting practice, SMB Growth, which helps startup businesses build new revenue channels in Silicon Valley, San Francisco.

Donna Bonavita '78, principal of Bonavita Design LLC, was featured as a "2020 Person to Watch" in the February issue of *Graphic Design USA*. **5**

William Krauss '78 MA was recognized by the Central Massachusetts Substance Abuse Association as an employee of the year and received a Special Recognition Award from the Department of Mental Health.

William Pope '78 organized his largest group performance to date, *Conquest*, in Greenwich Village. The performance kicked off an exploration of his career that was highlighted in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art (N.Y.) and the Museum of Modern Art (N.Y.). See profile Page 48. **6**



Margaret Prouse '78 was inducted into the Dover Capital City Rotary Club at the Maple Dale Country Club in Dover, Del. She recently retired as head librarian of Delaware Technical Community College, Terry Campus, prior to serving as Dover High School librarian.

1980s

Susan Confrancisco '81, '04 Cert, '11 Cert, was appointed director of special services for the Woodland Park (N.J.) School District in August 2019.

Ian Gordon '81 was named president of operations at Elara Caring, one of the nation's leading providers of home health care services.

Michael Price '81 received his third Primetime Emmy Award for his work on *The Simpson's* episode, "Mad about the Toy." He is a writer and co-executive producer of the series. Price is also a member of the School of Communication and Media's Board of Visitors. **7**

Joyce Brocaglia '82 was among the winners of the *NJBIZ* Best 50 Women in Business program which recognizes leaders in the enterprise environment – decision-makers, trendsetters and forward-thinkers.

Kevin McCormick '82 co-wrote the new children's book, *Host a Little Ghost and the Story of the Mystical Mums*. The collaboration has been featured on the New Jersey Network, in the New Jersey Education Association magazine, *Forbes*, and will be featured in *NEA Today*, the magazine of the National Education Association.

Pamela Wasman Jones '84 MA was appointed the director of clinical practice at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, N.J.

Nelson Pérez '84 was appointed archbishop of Philadelphia in January. His appointment makes him only the third Hispanic archbishop in the United States.

Martin J. Farawell '86 released his debut poetry collection, *Odd Boy*, after years as the executive director of the Dodge Poetry Festival.

Lisa Stoothoff '87 was appointed the dean of Donnelly College in July 2019.

Dana Commandatore '89 competed in the fifth season of ABC's *Great American Baking Show: Holiday Edition* in December.

Pamela deWaal '89 left her teaching position to support the increasing growth of the entrepreneurship education program, TREP\$, which she designed with co-founder Hayley Romano. TREP\$, short for enTREPpreneur\$, is a project-based learning program that teaches children in grades 4-8 how to start their own business. The program earned the Champion for Children Award from the New Jersey PTA and is currently offered in over 150 schools in the U.S. and abroad. **8**

1990s

Wamwari Waichungo '90, PhD, was elected to the national board for The Coca-Cola Company, as she is the vice president of Global Scientific and Regulatory Affairs.

Helen Archontou '91 was among the winners of the *NJBIZ* Best 50 Women in Business program which recognizes leaders in the enterprise environment – decision-makers, trendsetters and forward-thinkers.

Antoinette S. Johnson '91 published her second book, *12 Days: A Story of Faith, Hope, Healing, and Victory*, in August 2019. The book tells the story of her recovery from a surgical procedure.

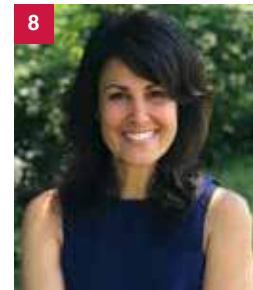
Sandip Kapadia '92 was appointed to the board of directors at Passage Bio, a genetic medicines company focused on developing transformative therapies for rare, monogenic central nervous system diseases.

Catherine Ciciola '93 won gold for Taekwondo, specializing in weapons and self-defense, at the 2019 UTA National Championships held in Shreveport, La. She has been training to defend her title and various other gold medals in 2020 at the National Championships. She will travel throughout New Jersey to give self-defense seminars to various groups looking to obtain basic self-defense skills. **9**

Bill Mesce Jr. '93 MA wrote and published two books in the fall – *The Wild Bunch: The American Classic That Changed Westerns Forever* and *Tides*, a collection of short stories.

Robert C. Ciampi '95 published a self-help book titled *When to Call a Therapist*.

Robert DiLaurenzio '95 and teammates of the 1993 and 2000 Montclair State University National Championship Baseball Teams got together in Atlantic City, N.J., for their annual team reunion. They enjoy celebrating their Red Hawk pride and team accomplishments, and hope to continue this tradition for many years to come. **10**



Fred Shandler '05

ORGANIC SUCCESS

Fred Shandler '05 runs one of the hottest restaurants in New Jersey – Arturo's Osteria & Pizzeria in Maplewood – but he leads his Instagram bio with the humble title "Head Dishwasher."

That description is a testament to Shandler's considerable work ethic and his collaborative approach to business management.

"We're a team of cooks," Shandler says, with everyone contributing. "It's a lot of trial and error."

Shandler graduated from Montclair State with a degree in Elementary Education, and, even though he didn't put it to use in the classroom, it's obvious

that he's an educator at heart. The staff at Arturo's – as well as his new bakery, The Bread Stand, also in Maplewood – are continuously training, learning, testing, sharing and aiming for excellence.

It's a recipe for success that took the once humble by-the-slice pizza place to a darling of *The New York Times* that has diners from Manhattan to Morristown lining up outside Arturo's nightly, where weekend waits can be up to two hours.

Shandler credits Montclair State for putting him on the right path: "The diversity of the staff and the student body both in terms of cultural and economic diversity, just having that exposure and

meeting all these people, helped to heighten my level of empathy. The ability to communicate with different people at different levels – I began to grasp that at Montclair State."

Empathy flows through The Bread Stand and Arturo's business ethos: "Supporting a local food ecosystem is simply a part of who we are, but I was always adamant about not jamming it down people's throats. It's ingrained. Essentially everything that we use is either locally or domestically sourced and is in-season."

"Eight or nine years ago there weren't many restaurants outside of Manhattan focusing

on locally sourced food and we were doing it in a really casual way – in a pizza shop with a refrigerator in the dining room. I love it."

Meanwhile Shandler is not resting on his laurels. "Maintaining the level of expectations is incredibly challenging. We are only as good as our guests' last experience." This is where his inner teacher comes out, schooling his staff of mostly 18- and 19-year-olds: "We spend an incredible amount of time preparing. Service is game time. But the real work is practice."

–Mary Barr Mann

Jonathan Guarino '97 was appointed as the senior vice president and chief financial officer of Soligenix, Inc.

Ellen Kolba '97 Cert has worked extensively with Montclair State University professors Emily Isaacs, Jessica Restaino and Joanmarie Kalter to publish her new book, *IN YOUR OWN VOICE. Writing Successful College Application Essays: A Guide for Students, Parents, and Teachers.* The book is a distillation of the highly successful Writers' Room Program which was created for the Montclair (N.J.) Public School System and extended to districts throughout the country. ¹¹

Claire Kreger-Boaz '97 is the senior project manager at NAMM Public Affairs and Government Relations of The NAMM Foundation, which promotes and supports music education and music making for people of all ages and abilities. ¹²

Lester Taylor '97 spoke at the New Jersey School Boards Association's Annual Workshop representing the Education Law Group of Florio Perrucci Steinhardt & Cappelli in October 2019. He spoke at the labor relations workshop on the topic, "One Strike, You're Out," addressing teacher strikes, work stoppages and slow-downs. He and the law firm were also appointed the Willingboro Township Council's new solicitor. ¹³

Nunzio Campanile '99 was promoted to acting head football coach at Rutgers University.

2000s

Robert L. Melchione '00 of Long Valley, N.J., was promoted by Kearny Bank to senior vice president and director of commercial and industrial lending.

Dr. Domenick Sportelli '00, '03 MS was nominated for the prestigious Dr. Oz ShareCare Award. In association with The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, New York Chapter, ShareCare Awards seek to inspire and honor the creators and supporters of broadcast and digital media health productions and programs that demonstrate Sharing Care.

Jason Velante '00 was elected to the Wanaque (N.J.) Board of Education. He is the first Filipino-American elected to a full term in Wanaque Borough's 101-year history. He also recently won the School Leadership Award, and will present his classrooms' accomplishments before the New Jersey School Board Association's Urban Boards Committee: Best Practices in Urban Education. ¹⁴

Patrick Naughter '02 made history as head coach of Montclair State University women's soccer as he won his 137th career game on October 30, 2019. He has led the program to five consecutive NCAA tournaments from 2012-2016, as well as two New Jersey Athletic Conference titles in 2012 and 2014.

Diane Fehder '03 competed on the competition baking show *Sugar Rush* on Netflix which aired in November 2019.

Brent Barnes '04 MA was announced as the next head coach of the Pioneer football program in Grinnell, Iowa.

Theresa Santaniello Bursey '04 was appointed the first female branch manager of the St. Petersburg (Fla.) office of UBS Financial Services Inc.

Suzanne Ronga Fonseca '04 returned to Lakeland Bank as assistant treasurer and branch operations manager for the Carlstadt, N.J., office.

Darren O'Neill '04 MA was appointed director of library services for the Morris County (N.J.) Library. He also is coordinator of guitar studies and a lecturer in research methods at the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State.

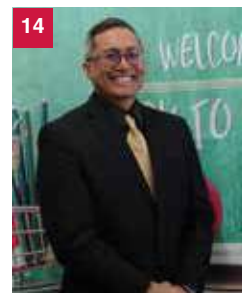
Ronald P. Botelho, Esq. '06 was named Of Counsel to the law firm Chasan Lamparello Mallon & Cappuzzo, PC, in Secaucus, N.J. He specializes in personal injury and medical malpractice litigation.

Joe Foster '06 joined the Center on Colfax in Denver, Colo., as vice president of development and communication in January. He will develop and manage the strategy and implementation of all fundraising and communications activities for the center. He previously served the Matthew Shepard Foundation as development director. ¹⁵

Michael Pena '07 earned an MEd in STEM Leadership, and is now a STEM coordinator at the City of Hialeah Educational Academy in Hialeah, Fla.

Nicole Poplawsky Shook '07 married Kenneth Shook Jr. on November 16, 2019, at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City.

Menachem Sokolic '07 MA joined Matrix New World Engineering as technical director of due diligence services, supporting the continued expansion of the company's site remediation services.



Damein Phoenix '13 MA

HOMETOWN ADVANTAGE

Damein Phoenix '13 MA has seen his teaching career take him halfway around the world. Now, back home in New Jersey, he's returned to his roots as an educational leader in the city where he grew up.

Phoenix serves as an assistant principal at East Orange Campus High School.

"I feel students can identify with me because I can relate to some of their stories and some of the circumstances they may face," he says.

Phoenix is among the Montclair State alumni of the nationally ranked Educational Leadership programs who are making a difference shaping the learning and experiences of their students in New Jersey and beyond.

"When you have students come back and tell you their stories, and tell you how much of an impact the things you've either said or done have had, words can't express how rewarding that is," Phoenix says.

Phoenix attended The Graduate School while teaching math,

returning home after a stint teaching calculus to international students in Johannesburg and students attending local farm schools in Soweto, South Africa.

"Montclair State gave me the tools I need to be a resource and a value to students," says Phoenix. "Transparency, communication and clear expectations, I learned that straight out of the program. I utilize them all the time."

Phoenix says, "I urge students to understand that anything is possible, provided you

have enough time, effort and intention behind it. My life has been enriched with different experiences. I've lived in different parts of the world. I've lived in different parts of New Jersey.

"So, I'll often tell them, 'Step out, go and learn about life outside of New Jersey so that you can come back enriched.' That has been my main message."

—Marilyn Joyce Lehren





Julia Dondero, who graduated from Montclair State in 2014 with a degree in Molecular Biology, is helping LabCorp develop and deploy an at-home self-collection kit. (Photo by Meghan Fratesi)

ACING THE TEST

Julia Dondero '14

Julia Dondero '14 has been working behind-the-scenes to bring a new at-home self-collection kit for LabCorp's COVID-19 diagnostic test into the hands of the health-care workers and first responders who need it the most.

Dondero leads the molecular diagnostics department at LabCorp's Raritan, New Jersey, lab, where she was able to rapidly scale up and validate an at-home collection kit that was the first authorized for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

"Maybe it's because I'm a nerd who is into biology, but when I first learned about the coronavirus, I

immediately thought, 'I have a feeling a few months from now, I'm going to be testing this by the thousands.'"

As the pandemic intensified with calls for more COVID-19 testing, Dondero has worked around the clock, overseeing the at-home collection kit's validation on various platforms and running samples to ensure the accuracy of results at multiple test sites.

"Every day we'd get more information, better information, more sample types, a better understanding of the accuracy of the tests," she says. "I have never seen anything grow this quickly before."

On May 1, 2020, the at-home collection kits became available to health-care workers and first responders who may have been exposed to the virus or have coronavirus symptoms. They are now able to use at home a Q-tip-style cotton nasal swab to collect a fluid sample, which is then mailed to a lab for testing.

The FDA worked with LabCorp to ensure that results are as accurate as samples collected at a doctor's office, hospital or other testing site. Self-sampling sidesteps the need for a clinician to perform the test, reducing their exposure to symptomatic patients. It also frees up personal protective equipment, which is in short supply. (Like all other COVID-19 tests on the market, the FDA authorized the test under its emergency use rules.)

LabCorp has released about 300,000 results, tests for the virus coming from the new at-home kits and hospitals, Dondero says.

Dondero's contribution is the type of work that often goes unnoticed. "A lot of times we get sidelined or hear only the negatives about the lack of testing," she says. "But it's nice that recently I've seen a lot of us being recognized as our testing has ramped up across the country."

The spotlight shined on Dondero in April when the American Clinical Laboratory Association (ACLA) featured her during Laboratory Professionals Week.

ACLA shared: "Julia has led the molecular diagnostics department at LabCorp's Raritan, New Jersey, lab over the last several weeks with technical expertise and a calm disposition during a tense and trying time. Her admirable leadership and dedication to patient care enabled LabCorp to validate the company's COVID-19



Julia Dondero, right, while a student at Montclair State, extracts DNA samples in the University's laminar flow hood. (Photo by Mike Peters)

assay on three instruments in an extremely short period of time, while also supervising and training molecular employees and many additional volunteers."

News of Dondero's success reached Biology Professor John Gaynor, who mentored Dondero when she was an undergraduate student doing Molecular Biology research at Montclair State University.

"When I heard that she was instrumental in the initial development of coronavirus testing at LabCorp, I was not surprised. She has always been meticulous and detail oriented – just the kind of individual you want doing that work," Gaynor says. "It makes me feel confident knowing that there are good scientists out there like Julia –

that we trained at Montclair State – doing this important work."

While at Montclair State, Dondero assisted Gaynor and Biology Professor Paul Bologna on a grant-supported project from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to study the jellyfish of Barnegat Bay.

Bologna's lab does the field collection and ecological work, Gaynor's lab does the molecular work, "primarily DNA extractions, PCR and DNA sequence analysis to identify unknown organisms," Gaynor says. "Although Julia started doing the molecular work in my lab, she also wanted to experience the field component side. So, she started volunteering to work on the boat collecting samples and making measurements of water quality.

Julia was a fast learner and very enthusiastic about the science."

Her work is now far different from the study of jellyfish at the Jersey Shore. "My department usually handles chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes simplex, HIV and hepatitis C," Dondero says. "We're used to pipetting something that's contagious. We already follow best practices for proper PPE. We always wear gloves, a lab coat, face shield or work under a hood."

She says she's taking extra precautions with the easily transmissible coronavirus: "When I get home, I don't take any chances. I won't even sit on the couch until I have showered and changed."

–Marilyn Joyce Lehren

Mohammed Abdelaziz '08, '13 MA was approved as the new Chatham (N.J.) High School athletic director in February.

Stephen Sobers '08 was promoted to sergeant in the Montclair (N.J.) Police Department.

Marcin Szorc '08 was named new director of athletics at Don Bosco Preparatory High School in Ramsey, N.J.

Alexis P. Albaret '09 joined the Watchung Hills Regional High School (N.J.) as a teacher of French.

Nicola Bertucci '09 and her husband, **Joseph Bertucci '09**, celebrated the birth of their twin sons, Joseph Michael and Nicholas Anthony Bertucci, in May 2019. ¹⁶

Alexandra Ford '09 portrayed Rosa Parks in a presentation at Union County's Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside, N.J., in February in honor of Black History Month. She is an actor-historian with the American Historical Theatre company and researched the role by traveling to Montgomery, Ala., and reading extensively on the life of Parks and the civil rights movement.

Jessica Salway Imperiale '09 married her husband, Greg Imperiale, at The Claridge Hotel in Atlantic City, N.J., in September 2019. She also had longtime friends from Montclair State in her bridal party: twin sister, **Joanna Salway '09**, **Nicole Bozzomo Scott '09** and **Elizabeth Piech '10**.

Neisha Louhar '09 competed and won in the Miss Infinity International 2018-2019 beauty pageant representing the State of New Jersey. Her charitable cause was child abuse and neglect. She is now a candidate for the Jersey City Board of Education. ¹⁷

Amy Zavadil '09 MA, '15 PhD serves as interim executive director of Public Safety at Barnard College.

2010s

Nicholas Crescenzo '10 was promoted to partner at Jersey State Controls. He is a senior account manager and is responsible for maintaining relationships and service to the company's many service accounts. He is also a certified ACE personal trainer.

Adam Bashian '11 was featured on the original cast recording of *Octet: A Chamber Choir Musical* by Dave Malloy.

Emine Kasapoglu '11 was promoted to associate manager at Novo Nordisk.

Glenn Lucci '11 was appointed assistant vice president of Lakeland Bank in Oak Ridge, N.J.

Sean Verbist '11 joined the Montclair (N.J.) Police Department as a police officer.

Drew Heimlich '12 married college sweetheart, **Trish Heimlich '12**, on October 8, 2019. The couple celebrated with a beautiful ceremony at the Grand Canyon. ¹⁸

Michael Kotch '12 MA was appointed national director of crisis management services at Lombardi Associates.

Lauren LaMantia '12, alongside husband, Charlie, celebrated the one-year anniversary of their restaurant, Cucina LaMantia, in Greenville, N.C.

Tayfun Selen '12 MBA was named Morris County's (N.J.) newest freeholder in February.

Allison Strong '12 released a new single titled "Human Years" and received the Images/Imágenes Performing Arts Award, both on December 11, 2019. (Photo courtesy of Images/Imágenes) ¹⁹

Natalia Weber '12 founded a production company with her partner, Douglas Tarenika, called Peace is the Mission Productions. They are currently in production on their first animation series called *Princess Tatenda and the Forest of Treasures*. In addition, she works full time as a senior event manager for Silver Lining Design Group, an event production group in Washington, D.C. ²⁰

Rashard Bradshaw '13, also known as Cakes Da Killa, competed on Netflix's hip-hop reality show *Rhythm + Flow*.

Casey Coleman '14 was named Outstanding New Professional by the Association of College Unions International at their regional conference in November.

Taras Petryshyn '14 MA was named the assistant principal at Clifton Public School No. 14 in Clifton, N.J.

Evan Ruggiero '14 joined an all-star cast, along with special guests Patti LuPone and Chita Rivera, at the Broadway Back to School Gala.



Courtney Crerand '15 joined the Madison (N.J.) Area YMCA School of Performing Arts (SOPA) as associate SOPA director.

Mark Harley '15 MA joined the Watchung Hills Regional High School (N.J.) as a teacher of physics.

Alyssa May '15 studied desert and marine landscapes through ecological and social field methods in Baja California in summer 2019. May, a wild animal keeper at the Wildlife Conservation Society/Bronx Zoo, is currently a graduate student in Miami University's Global Field Program.

Olutosin Araromi '16 represented Nigeria at the 2019 Miss Universe pageant. ²¹

Marija Giannakoulis '16 and twin sister, **Marta Spajic '16**, are police officers for the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C.

Alexandra Giardina '16 was hired as an account manager at On The Mark Communications in Clark, N.J.

Alexis Marrero '16 was promoted to assistant director of Digital Communications at McMurry University in Abilene, Texas. ²²

Savannah Martinez '16 married **Ryan King '16** in December 2019 in New York City.

Mia Pinero '16 was the understudy for Maria in the Broadway revival of *West Side Story*.

Melissa Shea '16 married Rich Van Kampen in Ringwood, N.J., on December 13, 2019. ²³

Stephen Blazejewski '17 was recognized by the Business Equality Network (BEQ) for his accomplishments in advancing the financial interests and well-being of LGBTQ individuals, families, and business owners in his role as a financial consultant with Equitable Advisors, and for his service on the board of the New Jersey LGBT Chamber of Commerce. He is the youngest person in North America to be recognized by BEQ. ²⁴

Annelise Cepero '17 was cast as a Shark in the Stephen Spielberg remake of *West Side Story*.

Alexandra Hoffmann '17 was recognized by New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and Montclair State University President Susan A. Cole for the apprenticeship program she developed for the German American Chamber of Commerce. ²⁵

Vladislav "Vlad" Kvarin '17 joined ABC's *Dancing with the Stars* as a professionally trained dancer. He has also competed on FOX's *So You Think You Can Dance* and appeared on numerous scripted, reality and television talk shows.

Vincent Purcell '17 was sworn in as a police officer for the Fairfield (N.J.) Police Department.

Antonio Salters '17 became the newest member of the Hillside (N.J.) Board of Education in January. ²⁶

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Marriage?
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Let us know!**

Send us a class note at classnotes@montclair.edu.

You can also update your information by calling the **Office of Alumni Engagement** at **973-655-4141**.



Mardoqueo Arteaga '18 has completed the first year of a PhD program in Economics at Fordham University with high honors and a fellowship. His first project dealt with mental health effects on earnings mobility and he is now focusing on monetary policy and financial instrument implications on wealth inequality. Arteaga is continuing his studies and will begin an internship with DiMassimo Goldstein's Data Analytics Growth Strategy team. **27**

Giuliana Carr '18 starred as Mrs. Stern in a world premiere at Luna Stage in West Orange (N.J.) for *Mrs. Stern Wanders the Prussian State Library*. **28**

Ian Carter '18 MA was named the new head track and field coach at Montclair State University in January.

Jenna Dingler '18 MS became head coach for the Manhattan College women's lacrosse team.

Melody Marti '18 was cast as a Shark in the Stephen Spielberg remake of *West Side Story*.

Jacqueline Neeley '18 has been cast in the ensemble of the San Jose Stage Company's upcoming production of *Chicago*.

Errol Clarke '19 is a tax consultant for Deloitte. He is continuing his education at Montclair State in the Master of Business Administration program. **29**

Tyler Dehl '19 MBA is a business planning analyst at Applegate Organic and Natural Meats.

Cordell Erskine '19 backpacked through South East Asia and volunteered with All Hands and Hearts in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, to repair houses damaged by Hurricane Maria. Brightfield Strategies in New York City hired him as a data analyst. **30**

Katelyn Sire '19 was appointed one of the newest assistant coaches and recruiting coordinators for the Montclair State University women's basketball team. She is also a former player on the team as a guard/forward.



Are you a sweetheart couple?


We want to hear your love story! Send us your story, photos and information at classnotes@montclair.edu or visit montclair.edu/alumni/msunions.

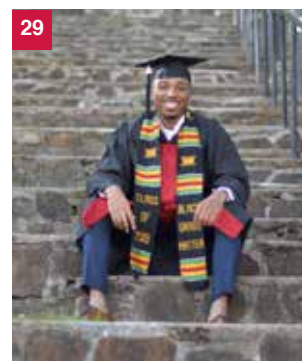


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IN MEMORIAM

Frederick Ernest Engelken '48
Louis Peragallo '49
Estelle J. Theander '49, '54 MA
Agnes Elizabeth Robertson '53
Lucas Loukedis '55
Gayle Mills Fantuzzi '59
Norman Worthington '60 MA
Alice W. Gibson '61
Judy A. Shaw '61
Lawrence Sciacchetano '64

Armando Canda '66
Marie Kane '67, '73 MA
Jean C. Wasowski '67
Robert Gleason '68, '80 MA
Allan J. Handelman '68 MA
Patricia L. Schall '68
Ruth Coppola '73 MA
Marie Morongell '76
Janice Matlag Ward '76
Patricia Baker Koechlin '77 MA

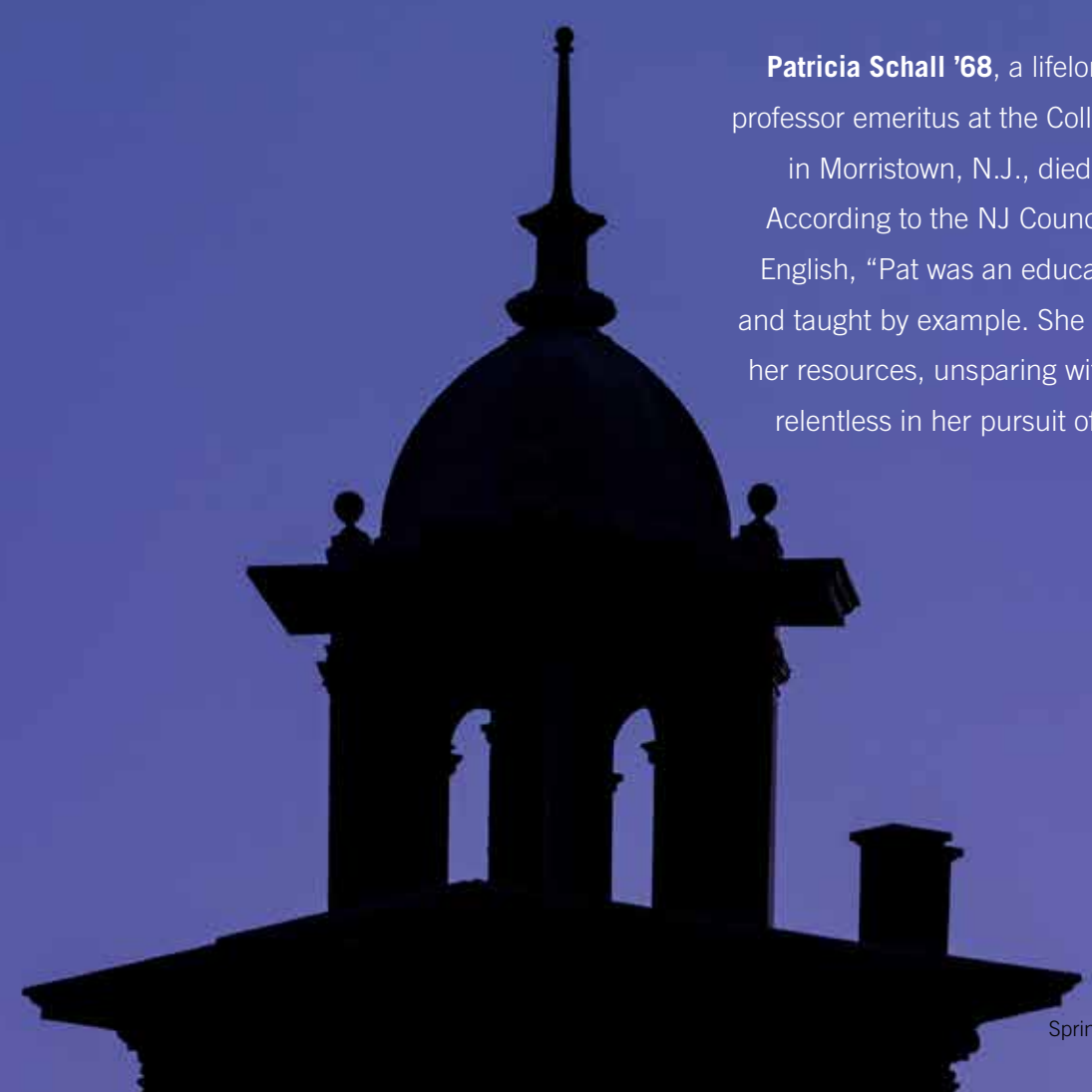
Sharon Sohn Treloar '78
Terry Last '79 MA
Edna Patton '83 MA
Sean Kelly '88
Andrew Constable '92
Marta Vartolone '94
Barbara Semmel '96 MA
Douglas Wunder '98
Donna M. Youker '05
Ruth Ferguson '09 MBA

Michael DiBartolo '15
Kenneth Fischetti '10 MA

Joan Schleede-Horn*
Madeleine Sergent*

*Former Faculty

Patricia Schall '68, a lifelong educator and professor emeritus at the College of St. Elizabeth in Morristown, N.J., died April 6, 2020. According to the NJ Council of Teachers of English, "Pat was an educator of excellence and taught by example. She was generous with her resources, unsparing with her praise, and relentless in her pursuit of achievement."





LASTING LESSONS

KLAUS SCHNITZER | PROFESSOR, ART AND DESIGN

A recent George Segal Gallery retrospective of Klaus Schnitzer's work, *Fifty Years of Inspiration and Impact: The Photographic Legacy of Klaus Schnitzer and His Students*, showcased images and captured testimonials reaching back a half century. As students described Schnitzer's influence, one word came up again and again: *think*. Since 1971, Schnitzer has been making art and photography students think – about everything from technical details to existential issues. “Professor Schnitzer provided me with a valuable lifelong tool in thinking and working with light and the creation of images,” says Chad Mooney '14. For Bridget Laudien '07, “Klaus was the one who taught me to think through my art, instead of making images for the sake of aesthetics. He approached the artistic end with the broadest of minds and a big heart.” All agree: There was no faking it in Schnitzer's classes. “He called upon us to think beyond the technicalities that made a good photograph,” according to Rex Thomas '12 MA. “We were asked to think about ourselves and why we make the art that we do. In the end, what I gained are the possibilities of what I could be as an artist, an educator and a person.” Recalls Daryl Lancaster '77: “Klaus Schnitzer was probably my most challenging professor. And the one that made me truly look at my work and never settle for mediocrity. Klaus Schnitzer taught me to see.”

—Mary Barr Mann

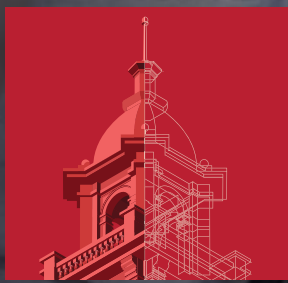
Read more about Schnitzer at montclair.edu/lasting-lessons/Schnitzer. Let us know which faculty member made a difference during your time at Montclair State at editor@montclair.edu.

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